

AGM MOTIONS 2020-2026

AGM MOTIONS 2026

The final motions (4) was circulated to all members and was available to download from the IASW website.

Motion 1

Proposed by: Fiachra Ó'Súilleabháin **Seconded by:** Monica Hynds O'Flanagan

That the IASW will increase the number of independent directors on the Board of Directors, from three (3) to four (4).

Explanation: A good board composition includes independent non Social Work Directors who bring improved governance and oversight, prevent group think, increase funders confidence and enhances decision making. The right mix of Directors ensures a board is equipped to navigate current and future challenges, driving the success of IASW.

The IASW needs Directors who bring expertise in the area of: HR, Finance, Communications & PR, Advertising & Marketing and Legal. At present we have expertise in the area of HR, Advertising & Marketing and Legal, however, it is crucial the IASW recruits a director with finance expertise to provide strategic financial leadership, ensuring long-term growth, sound investment decisions, and robust risk management.

Poll Results: motion 1 was passed with:

- 47 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 2 abstention

Motion 2

Proposed by: Miriam Mooney **Seconded by:** Karima Abbes

The IASW undertakes to explore strategies whereby it reduces any supports for products and services benefiting from Israeli illegal occupation of Palestinian lands.

Explanation: IASW unable to affiliate with Apartheid Free Zones/ BDS initiative at present as it does not meet IASW criteria.

Poll Results: motion 2 was passed with:

- 45 votes in favor
- 2 against
- 4 Abstention

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Motion 3

Proposed by: Miriam Mooney **Seconded by:** Karima Abbes

Motion 3 was withdrawn post AGM, due to procedural error that occurred during the voting process. The amended motion was resubmitted to the Board of Directors, in order for the Board to take the required action.

Original Motion 3: That the IASW continue to use its influence to encourage the membership of IFSW to act in solidarity with Palestinian Social Workers and Health care workers in the face of ongoing acts of violence and apartheid against them by Israel.

Amended Motion 3: That the IASW continue to use its influence to encourage the membership of IFSW to act in solidarity with Palestinian Social Workers and Health care workers in the face of ongoing acts of violence and apartheid against them by the Israeli Government, Administration and their policies.

Explanation: The IASW has a moral obligation to support Social Workers in Palestine whose rights are being eroded and violated.

Poll Results: motion 3 was passed with:

- 46 votes in favor
- 1 against
- 3 abstention

Motion 4

Proposed by: Miriam Mooney **Seconded by:** Karima Abbes

Original Motion 4: That the IASW expresses its profound concern about the Israeli parliament passing a new law on 30 March 2026 mandating the death penalty for Palestinians and only Palestinians.

Amended Motion 4: That the IASW expresses its profound condemnation about the Israeli parliament passing a new law on 30 March 2026 mandating the death penalty for Palestinians and only Palestinians.

Explanation: IASW unable to affiliate with Apartheid Free Zones/ BDS initiative at present as it does not meet IASW criteria.

Poll Results: motion 4 was passed with:

- 45 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 4 abstention

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The final motion (1) was circulated to all members and was available to download from the IASW website.

Motion 1

Proposed by: Miriam Mooney **Seconded by:** Karima Abbes

That IASW uses its influence with IFSW to request that IFSW speaks and acts in solidarity with Palestinian Social Workers and Health Care Workers who are being abducted, imprisoned and killed by Israel.

Explanation: Ample evidence from UN; WHO and independent Media reports that Israel is targeting Social Workers, Health care workers as well as children and civilians in Palestine. The IFSW has a moral obligation to support Social Workers when their rights are being so eroded and violated. The IASW also has this obligation thus the IASW should press IFSW to act.

Poll Results: motion 1 was passed with:

- 56 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 4 abstention

AGM MOTIONS 2024

The final motions (1-5) were circulated to all members and were available to download from the IASW website.

Motion 1

Proposed by: Dearbhla Ní Chúláin **Seconded by:** Oliver Brockmann

That the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) calls upon both the Minister of the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science and Directors of Social Work Programmes at universities across Ireland, along with their associated staff, to ensure and advocate for the implementation of a significant reduction in tuition fees for social work courses.

Explanation: Social work is fundamentally committed to promoting social justice, human rights, and equity. Central to the profession are the principles of diversity and inclusivity, and the goal to dismantle systemic and institutional barriers. However, the rising tuition fees for social work programmes across Irish universities starkly contradict these values, imposing significant barriers to entry,

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particularly for those from marginalised communities whom the profession seeks to support and represent. This motion outlines urgent reasons why a substantial reduction in these fees is essential:

1. **Critical Shortage of Social Workers:** Social work as a profession is currently facing significant challenges in terms of recruitment and retention. As of September 2023, there were 340 vacant roles in Tusla alone, highlighting a severe shortage of qualified social workers across Ireland. This shortage compromises the quality and reach of essential social services across Ireland.
2. **Urgent Equity Concerns:** Over the past three years, tuition fees for social work programmes have risen sharply, with increases of up to 23% exacerbating financial barriers. This rise is particularly impactful for students from underrepresented and marginalised communities, including Black and ethnic minority groups like Irish Travellers. For instance, MSW fees at the University of Galway have escalated from €7,016 in 2021 to €8,640 in 2024. Such steep increases directly challenge the social work profession's commitment to inclusivity and anti-racism, making it increasingly difficult for diverse communities to access the education necessary to serve their own populations effectively.
3. **Economic Barriers Deter Entry:** Despite initiatives and calls to expand social work course capacities and introduce alternative pathways such as apprenticeships, a decline in applicant numbers suggests that these efforts are being undercut by the high costs of education. Comprehensive reports from Mooney, Wilson, and Kelleher (2023) and O'Meara and Kelleher (2022) confirm that the prohibitive expense of social work education is a major deterrent for prospective students. In a detailed survey by Mooney et al. (2023), an overwhelming majority of respondents (47 out of 49) identified 'financial burden' as their primary obstacle to pursuing a career in social work, highlighting the urgent need for tuition fee reductions.
4. **Disparity in Tuition Fees Across Institutions:** There is also a significant variation in tuition fees for social work programmes across Irish universities, with amounts ranging from €16,000 to €20,000 for a two-year MA, excluding the additional significant and often hidden costs for mandatory placements. In contrast, Atlantic Technological University offers a more affordable option at €9,500. This substantial disparity raises critical questions about the equity and transparency in how these fees are calculated and the implications for access to education.

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5. **High Fees for Non-EU Students:** The tuition fees for non-EU students, on average approximately €40,000 for the two-year MA in Social Work or €110,400 for a four-year BSS in Trinity, are particularly exorbitant. This pricing structure is at odds with efforts to 'decolonise' the profession and create a more diverse and inclusive workforce.
6. **Economic Barriers for Working-Class Students:** The combination of high tuition fees and unpaid, extensive mandatory fieldwork placements severely limits access to social work education for working-class students. These financial barriers not only marginalise those from less affluent backgrounds but also actively undermine efforts to diversify the profession. Reports by Mooney et al. (2023) and O'Meara and Kelleher (2022) highlight how such economic obstacles impede the development of a socio-economically diverse workforce and discourage individuals who are unable to shoulder substantial debt. One respondent poignantly captures this issue in Mooney et al. (2023), stating, "they make it so difficult for people to actually do the course and what they're doing is they're actually putting off an awful lot of people who are from the very communities that they should have in the profession, because they're making it into very much a middle-class profession by making the fees prohibitive" (p.33). Additionally, the financial strain is vividly described by another participant: "The master's in social work is extremely expensive - especially since social workers are in demand. Placements are long - necessary, but students are essentially paying thousands of euros to work full-time hours for free. This creates work burdens and means students are often having to work weekends to financially cope. This can mean students are regularly working a 7-day week. Not sustainable" (p.37).
7. **Critical Diversity in Social Work Education:** As mentioned above, the prohibitive costs of social work education are a major obstacle in cultivating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community- an essential factor for delivering effective social work services. Current fee structures disproportionately impact non-white and non-middle-class individuals, significantly limiting their entry into the field. A respondent from Mooney et al.'s (2023) study highlights this issue, stating, "Social work claims to reflect diverse groups, however academic fees within Ireland act as a barrier for including people from a low socioeconomic background into the profession" (p.23). This underscores how financial barriers prevent the profession from serving as a true reflection of the diverse populations it aims to support. Moreover, O'Meara and Kelleher's (2022) report highlights the necessity for educational application process

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reforms to effectively attract a wider array of asocial work students. Implementing such reforms is crucial not only for fostering cultural competency within the social work sector but also for ensuring that practitioners bring diverse lived experiences that are in tune with the multifaceted needs and challenges of the communities they serve.

8. Critical reforms needed: Although Mooney et al. (2023) and O'Meara and Kelleher (2022) recognise that many universities have launched initiatives to widen participation, they argue that these efforts are insufficient and that more needs to be done. Specifically in the field of social work, there is a significant need for more focused measures to increase access and enhance diversity within the profession. In response to these challenges, it is crucial for directors and staff of social work programmes to engage in concerted efforts with universities and educational policymakers. Reducing fees should be the immediate first step in this endeavor. However, this action should be part of a broader overhaul. This entails a comprehensive re-evaluation and restructuring of fee frameworks to ensure affordability, equity, and inclusivity in social work education. Only through such concerted efforts can we attract a diverse student body that authentically reflects and serves the communities it aims to empower.

This AGM is called upon to actively lead and encourage its members to participate in advocacy efforts aimed at reducing the costs of social work education. By doing so, the association will reaffirm its commitment to the core values of social work- social justice, human rights, equality, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, and ensure that these values are reflected not only in professional practice but also in access to education.

Poll Results: motion 1 was passed with:

- 54 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 3 abstention

Motion 2

Proposed by: Oliver Brockmann **Seconded by:** Dearbhla Ní Chúláin

That the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) calls upon the Minister of the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science for the financial reimbursement of social work placements and support initiatives and measures working towards this aim.

Explanation: As the *signature pedagogy* of social work education, placements

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play a crucial role in forming competent practitioners who can effectively connect and apply theoretical knowledge in their practice (O'Meara, 2024). Despite their critical role, social work placements in Ireland remain unpaid, an exploitative practice that undermines their educational value and therefore purpose, while also undermining social work workforce recruitment efforts. Financial reimbursement for placements is paramount to ensure the diversity and competency of the future social work workforce, bolster the professional status of social work, and uphold the future sustainability of the social work profession.

Unpaid placements impose a disproportionate burden on economically marginalised students. Moreover, as race, gender, and dis/ability status disparities are inherently interlinked with economic inequalities, the financial burden of social work placements act as an entry barrier for those from marginalised communities, thus reinforcing oppressive race, class, gender and dis/ability status inequities (Gair and Baglow, 2017). This contradicts the professions commitment anti-racism, diversity and social justice.

Furthermore, the absence of financial remuneration undermines social work's status as a legitimate profession by perpetuating the notion that social work is akin to volunteerism rather than skilled labour. Students from adjacent professions such as nursing, midwifery and clinical psychology are remunerated, highlighting the valued professional status of these professions (The Psychological Society of Ireland, 2022; Campbell, 2023).

Importantly, the lack of financial remuneration for placements is a significant deterrent to starting and completing social work degrees (Morley *et al.*, 2022), critically undermining recruitment efforts at a time when Ireland faces a severe shortage of qualified social workers. Considering that the "overall number of applicants to existing courses appears in fact to be falling recently, with some individual HEI's also reporting challenges in filling existing programme places from one year to the next" (O'Meara, 2024, p. 6) it is quizzical why there is no attempt to explore the possibilities for financial remuneration for placements or the reduction of course fees as the initial method of recruitment; Especially when considering exorbitant university fee hikes to study social work and the accommodation crisis. Instead, there are explorations concerning the expansion of the number of programmes and placements. This is utterly illogical and fails to address the root causes of the recruitment problem, particularly when considering that, as O'Meara (2024, p. 7, emphasis in original) notes, "placements *do* get filled each year".

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Recognising the self-evident exploitative practice of unpaid placements, the way that this reproduces societal inequalities and undermines initiatives to reduce labour shortages, the EU parliament, in June 2023, voted overwhelmingly in support of the drafting of legislation to ban unpaid internships in the EU (O'Carroll and Kassam, 2024).

Additionally, the necessity for students to seek and balance paid employment with their unpaid placements often results in diminished educational outcomes (Morley, 2023). Providing financial remuneration for these placements will allow students to fully immerse themselves in their professional development, enhancing the depth of their learning and ensuring the competence of future practitioners (Morley, 2023). Contrary to concerns that financial remuneration might reduce the educational value of placements to mere employment, it is actually the absence of payment that undermines the educational potential of these experiences. The lack of financial support forces students to divide their focus between paid employment to sustain themselves and their placements, detracting from the quality of their learning during placements. It is, again, quizzical why there is so much attention ensuring that there are adequate placement opportunities available to future social work students (see for example O'Meara, 2024), but no attempt to ensure that future social work students can actually engage with the learning opportunities that are made possible by these placements.

Furthermore, given the current overburdened state of the profession and the shortage of qualified social workers, students frequently step in to fill essential personnel gaps within organisations. Compensating students for their placements acknowledges their valuable contributions and aligns with the ethical mandate of the profession that all workers, which includes students, deserve fair compensation.

Payment for work, that includes the work of students while on placements, is a fundamental aspect of any respected profession. The fact that social work placements are not paid, is fatal for students, the quality of their education and the future of the profession. There are numerous international movements such as P4P, students against placement poverty, and paid placements Aotearoa NZ which recognise the importance of addressing "placement poverty" (Morley, 2023, no page).

This motion, if passed, would represent a significant step forward in strengthening the social work education system in Ireland, ultimately enhancing the quality of social service delivery across the country.

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Poll Results: motion 2 was passed with:

- 47 votes in favor
- 3 against
- 8 abstention

Motion 3

Proposed by: Frank Brown **Seconded by:** Kerry Cuskelly

The IASW calls upon the HSE to lift its recruitment embargo for social work posts within adult community mental health teams.

Explanation:

1. National mental health policy 'A Vision for Change' and the updated 'Sharing the Vision' outline that each community mental health team (CMHT) should include social work (VFC) 9.9 & the composition of (CMHT serving a population of 50,000 should comprise...two psychiatric social workers (one per 25,000), (VFC) 11.7.1. Each patient attending community mental health teams should have an allocated key worker and care plan (STV) recommendation 28. Not replacing vacant social work posts within community mental health teams would be a breach of national mental health policy.
2. The arbitrary recruitment embargo prevents the recruitment to vacant social work posts within community mental health teams.
3. The embargo is placing an unfair burden on those social workers remaining within mental health services to cover vacant posts, it is affecting the quality-of-service provision to service users, many at risk of homelessness, delaying their discharge from acute psychiatric units and limiting the support they may need to stay well.
4. Social work students qualifying this summer who are interested in working within community mental health teams may seek employment outside of Ireland because of this recruitment embargo.

Poll Results: motion 3 was passed with:

- 54 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 4 abstention

Motion 4

Proposed by: Kerry Cuskelly **Seconded by:** Sinead McKenna

That the IASW board convene a working group whose aim is to develop a

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SMART action plan in relation to Advanced social work practice based on the SWAMH April 2024... in adult mental health briefing paper.

Explanation: Within a rapidly changing and evolving health and social care climate, investment in the further development of the vital role of social work across Irish social and health services should be a key priority for government departments, employers and the public. Recent reports have highlighted the need for reform of health and social care professions roles in the area of advanced practice and the priorities off the Chief HSCP Office includes developing advanced practice roles across health and social care professions in Ireland. At departmental level, a Health and Social Care Workforce Planning Strategy, Action Plan and Planning Projection Model is being developed with technical support provided by the European Commission. A key outcome of this project is the production of rolling health and social care workforce planning action plans with targeted policy measures for health and social care workforce reform.

Poll Results: motion 4 was passed with:

- 53 votes in favor
- 1 against
- 2 abstention

Motion 5

Proposed by: Mary Mc Namara **Seconded by:** Lisa Hurson

That the IASW call on the HSE to resource Social Work staffing in CAMHS to the recommended levels as per Vision for Change. We are currently resourced nationally at only 40% Vision for Change.

Explanation: The low levels of Social Work staffing in CAMHS is having a direct impact on the service users. There is a very significant systemic component to CAMHS presentations and therefore a systemic response is required to aid recovery. Social Work intervention is required in almost all CAMHS cases, however, due to shortages it is not always possible to provide the required input. Safeguarding is another significant regulatory requirement and SW provide leadership and oversight on this on MDT's.

Poll Results: motion 5 was passed with:

- 51 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 2 abstention

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The final motions (1-6) were circulated to all members and were available to download from the IASW website.

Motion 1

Proposed by: Frank Browne **Seconded by:** Sinead McKenna

That the IASW call upon the Minister of State for Mental Health to review the proposed implementation of that part of the Report of the Expert Group on the Review of the Mental Health Act 2001, regarding criteria for involuntary detention, because implementation of that recommendation could lead to the unnecessary delay in a person receiving treatment and to premature discharge when a patient is only beginning to recover.

Explanation: Recommendation 13b, within the **Report of the Expert Group on the Mental Health Act 2001** (2014) is of particular concern and despite the well-meaning intention of the Expert Group to raise the threshold for involuntary detention, it is not in the interest of persons with severe and enduring mental illness who lack insight into their condition, to **change the criteria for detention as proposed**.

We welcome many of the recommendations of the **Report of the Expert Group on the Review of the Mental Health Act 2001**, and we support in particular those recommendations that will protect voluntary patients who may lack the capacity to consent to treatment (Recommendations 22 to 33.)

However, we argue that the human rights of patients are protected within the existing wording of the involuntary criteria (Section 3 (1) a and b, without the need to change the wording in Section 3 (1) a, and b, of the Mental Health Act, specifically in relation to risk to the patient and others. Indeed, every person should have the right to live in the community free from serious mental illness that could put them and others at serious risk.

So, we are calling in our motion that the specific wording below as it is written in the current Act is not changed.

'Serious likelihood of the person concerned causing immediate and serious harm to himself or herself or to other persons...and ...would be likely to lead to a serious deterioration in his or her condition,' is not changed to.

Recommended change in wording (13b)

'Is immediately necessary for the protection of life of the person, for protection

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from a serious and imminent threat to the health of the person, or for the protection of other persons'.

The fact that the Expert Group recommendation 36 re. Authorised Officers (AOs), all future applications should be made by a trained mental health professional who is actively seeking the least alternative to involuntary admission, while trying to limit risk to the patient and others and ensure timely treatment, this will enhance the protection of the rights of patients.

The proposed wording '**imminent threat to the health of the person**' (as opposed to the existing 'serious deterioration') is unhelpful, as the reality for those of us (Mental Health Act AOs Sec 9 MH Act) who make an assessment for an application for involuntary admission is that patients who are mentally ill can neglect themselves as a result of psychotic or paranoid thinking in terms of diet, isolation and self-care. This does not happen 'imminently but gradually over a period of weeks and months to a '**serious deterioration**' when action needs to be taken. Also, of concern to the many mental health professionals who work with patients who have severe and enduring mental illness, lack insight, and have numerous previous admissions, is that the proposed Report of the Expert Group recommendation 14, recommends that detention should only be as long as...***the person continues to satisfy all the stated criteria.*** The cause of concern is that when the patient is beginning to recover but still lacks insight, they may be discharged from detention because there is no longer an imminent threat to their health, or life. The risk of premature discharge is that patients may disengage from treatment and working with mental health professionals in the community, there will be no time also, to support the patient in improving their psycho-social needs, this could result in financial difficulties, relationship problems and even homelessness.

Ref: Report of the Expert Group on the Review of the Mental Health Act 2001 (DOH.2014)

Criteria for Detention (p89)

12. Detention of a person with a mental illness cannot be permitted simply by virtue of the fact that the person may have such an illness or because his or her views or behaviour deviate from the norms of the prevailing society.

13. The recommended new criteria for detention are:

- a. the individual is suffering from mental illness of a nature or degree of severity which makes it necessary for him or her to receive treatment in an approved centre which cannot be given in the community; and***
- b. it is immediately necessary for the protection of life of the person, for protection from a serious and imminent threat to the health of the person, or for the protection of other persons that he or she should receive such treatment and it cannot be provided unless he or she is detained in an approved centre under the Act; and***
- c. the reception, detention and treatment of the person concerned in an approved centre would be likely to benefit the condition of that person to a material extent.***

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14. *Detention should only be for as long as absolutely necessary, and the person continues to satisfy all the stated criteria.*

15. *Immediately a person no longer satisfies any one of these criteria, the admission or renewal order must be revoked. In those circumstances, the person may only remain in the approved centre on a voluntary*

The current wording of the Mental Health Act 2001: Section 3 of the 2001 Act relating to mental disorder reads as follows: '3.—(1) In this Act "mental disorder" means mental illness, severe dementia or significant intellectual disability where— (a) because of the illness, disability or dementia, there is a **serious likelihood of the person concerned causing immediate and serious harm to himself or herself or to other persons**, or (b) (i) because of the severity of the illness, disability or dementia, the judgment of the person concerned is so impaired that failure to admit the person to an approved centre would be likely to **lead to a serious deterioration in his or her condition or would prevent the administration** of appropriate treatment that could be given only by such admission, and (ii) the reception, detention and treatment of the person concerned in an approved centre would be likely to benefit or alleviate the condition of that person to a material extent.

Poll Results: motion 1 was defeated with:

- 9 votes in favor
- 18 against
- 9 abstention

Motion 2

Proposed by: Aoife Bairead **Seconded by:** Kate Gillen

That the IASW calls for Tusla to protect and promote the role of social work as the key profession to deliver relevant services to children and families in all children's services and to explicitly recognise that relationship building, support, advocacy and critical thinking are key elements of the social work role.

Explanation: Due to the chronic issues in retention in Tusla, unfilled social work vacancies are being replaced by other professions. These professions appear to be utilised to offer direct support to children and families while social workers are being asked to act by way of case managers, providing a helicopter service rather than direct intervention. This undermines the integrity of the social work profession which is, primarily, centred around relationships and assessments and targeted response and interventions? In addition, it ignores the voices of children and families who in various bodies of research, most recently the 'Through the Eyes of the Child' report, have expressed their view that having a consistent social worker with whom they can build a relationship result in a more positive experience of the service provided within the Child and Family Agency. While services to children must continue in times of constraint, eroding the role of social workers will do serious harm to the quality and safety of all our children's services.

Poll Results: motion 2 was passed with:

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- 31 votes in favor
 - 0 against
- 3 abstention.

Motion 3

Proposed by: Caroline Boyd **Seconded by:** Aoife Bairead

This AGM agrees that the IASW advocate to the Department of Health and DCEDIY for a review of the use of “special arrangements” to provide accommodation and care to young people in lieu of an appropriate residential placement. This practice should be ceased in a planned way and alternative arrangements be put in place to ensure consistency and quality of care for any child who requires it.

Explanation: In April 2022 the IASW raised our concerns regarding the crisis in residential care to Tusla. This letter also set out some of the core issues we believed were integral to resolving this emergency. This crisis has not abated, and in many parts of the country appears to have worsened. Given this we believe there is a need for the Department of Health and DCEDIY to review this as a matter of urgency.

Central Residential Services is to provide residential placements for children and young people who are requiring this type of care. There is a well-documented shortage of placements and the increasing use of “special” arrangements to provide this care. These arrangements have included the use of hotels, homeless hostels, and apartments.

The staff are from agencies who are privately set up. Young people have no stability in these types of placements, often being placed outside their own geographical area, some distance from supports and birth family. They are cared for, often on their own, with a staff team who at times are not able to provide the boundaries and guidance needed.

Settings like hotels are an alien environment when we think about what a home situation should look like and how the needs of a vulnerable young person should be met. Often these young people are out of mainstream education and with the moving from one area to another it can be difficult and time consuming trying to get timely access to supports for a young person e.g., tutor, CAMHS, GP. Social Workers are often driving long distances to see young people. Family visits are a huge challenge in this situation.

There needs to be an analysis of why so many young people are now needing residential care as opposed to foster care, are there gaps in the current system of residential care and the wider system that mean young people end up being discharged from placements prematurely and that consideration be given to the issues that should be considered in resolving this crisis as raised by the IASW in 2022.

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Poll Results: motion 3 was passed with:

- 32 votes in favor
- 1 against
- 3 abstention.

Motion 4

Proposed by: Kate Gillen **Seconded by:** Caroline Boyd

That the IASW advocate to the Department of Health and DCEDIY for adequate resourcing of Children's Disability Network Teams including the recruitment of social workers in order that wait lists for assessment and service provision are reduced and ultimately waiting lists are eliminated.

Explanation: Children's Disability Network Teams are struggling with provision of assessment and service due to difficulties in recruiting and retaining multi - disciplinary teams with some teams able to provide universal services only while others have extensive waiting lists e.g., one area currently has 650 children on its waiting list.

While the implementation of Progressing Disability services for children and young people was meant to ensure fairer access to services regardless of location, this model was not properly resourced or supported from inception and there are huge gaps in the quality of assessment and service provision across the country. This has resulted in a high number of children not receiving an adequate service and their needs not been met by key services. These children are already vulnerable by virtue of their additional needs. This absence of support only serves to exacerbate this and cause additional stress to them their school settings if they have one and the families who are caring for them

Poll Results: motion 4 was passed with:

- 33 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 2 abstention.

Motion 5

Proposed by: Aoife Bairead **Seconded by:** Maria McGloughlin

This AGM supports the IASW is seeking the establishment of a government working group for planning the creation of a dedicated trauma informed support service to support care experienced children and their families. This working group should include stakeholders from all relevant government departments including the DCEDIY, the HSE, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education, alongside key stakeholders from the voluntary sector including care experienced families and foster carers.

Explanation: The recent publication '*They shouldn't have to ask: Exploring the need for specialist mental health services for care-experienced and adopted children and their families*' by Coulter et al (2022) gives a robust analysis of the complex emotional, behaviour and mental health needs that many care experienced people present with. It

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further looked at the implications of these needs on the wider family system, particularly due to the difficulty in not only accessing therapeutic services, but more importantly accessing those with the knowledge and expertise to meet their child's 'complex and multiple needs'. Equally the lack of integrated, holistic services that supported the child and the family system was a huge barrier to children's recovery from the trauma and adversity experienced. The article concluded that a specific attachment and trauma service that children and their families can access in a timely and coherent manner was required.

The authors call for the following.

1. Increase support for foster carers and adoptive parents.
2. Provide routine early mental health screening for care-experienced and adopted children.
3. Provide additional trauma and attachment training opportunities for CAMHS, child welfare and education practitioners.
4. Increase capacity to provide specialist therapeutic services.
4. Improve inter-agency communication and collaboration.
5. Adopt a 'whole-family'/household 'ordinary care' approach in relation to addressing the mental health needs of care-experienced and adopted children.
6. Instigate a degree of assessment priority within CAMHS in light of the high risk of harm faced by children in care and those who are adopted.
7. Create a dedicated specialist attachment- and trauma-informed therapeutic service for care-experienced and adopted children and their families.

Poll Results: motion 5 was passed with:

- 34 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 3 abstention.

Motion 6

Proposed by: Maria McGloughlin **Seconded by:** Caroline Boyd

This AGM is calling on Tusla to establish a more comprehensive and holistic support system for foster carers. This includes a significant increase in the rates of subvention paid for carers and a significant expansion of support services for carers. The contribution of foster carers should be formally recognised when it comes to other matters for example pensions.

Explanation: For the last 2 years the use of Special Residential Emergency arrangements evidence that there are not sufficient fostering or residential placements. Now children under 10 years old are regularly in a position where there is no foster placement available and placed in emergency arrangements that may not be suitable to their needs.

It has been long established that foster homes should be homes for life especially where children remain living in care on a long-term basis. Increasingly at least one of the parents who are fostering are expected to stay at home and there is a financial burden in caring that is not recognised. This is not reflective of most family home where children are not in alternative care and additionally creates a barrier for new foster

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carers from diverse backgrounds entering the pool of foster carers available. The increase in subvention is important in that the current allowance has not been increased in the last decade and this is causing stress to carers rather than recognising the value of the caring as it did when last increased. It is recognised that having the stability of a carer available at all times is important but this needs to be a financially viable arrangement for families.

Foster Parents in parts of the country and/or with agencies where good support services are available report that this is really valued by them, and they find that this is important in maintaining them in their role as carers. It is also recognised that timely early intervention that meets the needs of the children can have a significant role in preventing placements ending in an unplanned premature way.

Poll Results: motion 6 was passed with:

- 38 votes in favor
- 0 against
- 1 abstention.

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Motion 1

Proposed by: Kerry Cuskelly **Seconded by:** Paul McCarthy

That this AGM affirms the following:

- Social work is a human-rights based profession,
- “Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to Social Work” (IFSW, 2014),
- “That society has an obligation to pursue justice, in all its forms, on behalf of every person including the assertion and protection of their human rights” (IASW, 2020),
- “Social workers around the world have a long history of working for the achievement of human rights, including an explicit grounding of practice in human rights principles: human dignity, non-discrimination, participation, transparency, and accountability” (Mapp et al, 2019).
- Social workers work to uphold human-rights in their every-day practice in practical and tangible ways.
- The concept of human rights is interwoven into the very fabric, narrative and history of Social Work and the removal of any reference to human rights in CORU’s Code of Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers grievously alters the narrative and meaning of Social Work in Ireland.

Explanation: Further to the successful motion passed in the 2021 AGM, “That the IASW, in recognition of its centrality to Social Work Values, Ethics and Practice, initiate a campaign for the reinstatement of the term ‘Human Rights’ in the Social Workers Registration Board (CORU) Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics”, we wish to (re)affirm social workers explicit commitment to being a human rights-based profession at this AGM. We want to do this to ensure CORU and any other external organisations, bodies, or persons not familiar with the activity, skills, knowledge, and theory-base of

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social work, is clear that social work is a human-rights based profession. The #SWisHumanRights campaign continues to advocate for the reinsertion of references to human rights in the CORU Social Work code of conduct and ethics. This motion contributes to this advocacy.

An Amendment was proposed to the Motion. Amended to read:

- Social work is a human-rights based profession and discipline.

54 in favour - 0 abstentions - 1 against.

Motion 2

Proposed by: Áine Davin **Seconded by:** Kerry Cuskelly

That this AGM supports calls for the development of “Safe Harbour” legislation which would provide liability protection to social workers where, in situations of proven high caseloads, low resources, and excessive demands from management, workers would not find their professional registration coming into question, should they, due to the aforementioned constraints, not be able to work to reasonable safe standards.

Explanation: An example of Safe Harbour legislation for in health care would be in parts of America “Safe Harbour” is something a nurse can invoke to protect their licences if they find themselves in compromised practise situations where it is not in the best interest of patients for them to accept an assignment, e.g., accepting expanded patient assignments. This legislation is necessary for social workers in the current working environment.

46 in favour - 9 abstentions - 0 against.

Motion 3

Proposed by: Vivian Geiran **Seconded by:** Majella Hickey

Emergency Motion That this AGM supports the decision to create a new category of membership.

Section 1: Membership

Criteria

- 1.1. The membership of the Association shall consist of:
 - a. Individuals who hold a social work qualification including the NQSW awarded by the National Social Work Qualification Board, the CQSW formerly awarded by CCETSW or who are recognised as social workers by the Social Work Registration Board of CORU.
 - b. Overseas members need also be registered by a relevant registration board as outlined above.
 - c. Individuals who hold membership of the British Association of Social Workers, Northern Ireland may be admitted to ‘Associate’ membership of the IASW. Associate members do not have voting rights at the Annual or Extraordinary General Meetings.
 - d. Individuals who have retired, currently non-working (i.e. on sabbatical, students on recognised social work qualifications, working in a non-social work post), or are unemployed but who hold a social work qualification including the NQSW awarded by the National Social Work Qualification

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Board, the CQSW formerly awarded by CCETSW or who are registered as social workers with the Social Work Registration Board of CORU.

e. Student members being persons undergoing a recognised undergraduate course of studies in Social Work or a recognised post graduate course under conditions prescribed by the Board of the Association

f. On the invitation of the Chair, a Commercial Person who is not a Member of the Company may be co-opted to the Board either to fill a vacancy or as an additional Director provided that the appointment does not cause the number of Directors to exceed the maximum number of Directors. That person so co-opted shall remain a Member of the Board only until the next Annual General Meeting, when s/he shall retire and may stand for re-election at that AGM.

Explanation: BASW NI has a unique place as the only UK jurisdiction to share an international land border, that being with the Republic of Ireland. IASW and BASW NI have a close working relationship and regularly partner on specific projects, e.g.

1. SWSD 2018 Conference (Dublin)
2. Joint WSWD celebrations 2020, 2019 and 2017
3. Shaping Professional Identity: A all-Ireland study.
4. An Abuse of Power (conference on elder abuse 2021)
5. Joint statements on Brexit and join letters to respective governments.

Brexit has brought about a fracture in the seamlessness of cross-border activities on the island of Ireland and both parties recognise the potentially damaging impact of this, as such we think it is beneficial to have a clear and public relationship that strengthens our existing cooperation.

Both organisations are keen to explore a more formal link and to explore the idea of Associate Membership. The idea has been signed off by the NSC of BASW NI and The Board of IASW.

We would like to pilot an associate membership scheme which would, under agreed terms and conditions, enable members of one professional body, IASW, becoming associate members of BASW NI. The scheme would also entitle members of BASW NI to become associate members of IASW. Associate membership of one body will be the gateway to joining the activities of the other body and building our respective professional organisational connections in areas of mutual interest and benefit. We will set clear terms and conditions of what an associate scheme will offer, North and South.

55 in favour - 1 abstentions - 0 against.

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AGM MOTIONS 2021

Motion 1 – CARRIED

Proposed by: Aine McGuirk **Seconded by:** Vivian Geiran
On behalf of the IASW Board of Directors.

That the IASW will increase the number of members on the Board of Directors, from ten (10) to eleven (11) for the coming year and that this arrangement is to be reviewed again by the Board ahead of the 2022 AGM.

Explanation: As per Rule 45 of the IASW Constitution, the number of Directors shall be not less than seven (7) and unless and until determined by the Company in general meeting, not more than ten (10). As per Rule 56, the Company may from time to time by ordinary resolution increase or reduce the number of Directors and may also determine in what rotation the increased or reduced number is to go out of office. There are currently ten Directors. One of these is stepping down at this year's AGM, creating one vacancy. The remaining nine Directors have resubmitted their names for consideration for re-election this year and there are two new candidates for the single vacancy arising. Because of the nature of the work programme currently being undertaken by the Board, allied to the valuable contribution the two 'new' candidates can bring to the Association, the Board seeks to facilitate the incorporation of the two new Directors to the Board, for the coming year.

55 in favour - 2 abstentions - 2 against.

Motion 2 – CARRIED

Proposed by: Niamh Finucane **Seconded by:** Paula Markey

That the IASW would advocate for the recognition of social work in the provision of bereavement care in Ireland and for the provision of a bereavement social work posts in all hospitals, hospices, and nursing homes in Ireland.

Explanation: Social Workers have competence in the provision of bereavement support and bereavement counselling to bereaved relatives. Social Workers nationally, both within the acute sector and within the hospice sector, have a long history in the provision of a range of bereavement support and counselling to individuals and families as they adjust to the death of their relative. The deaths may have been sudden, such as a Road Traffic Accident, suicide, or an acute event or it may have been an anticipated death. Social workers support bereaved relatives with the psychosocial transitions that arise in their life as a result of the death, provide support in relation to practical issues and also provide therapeutic support. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of deaths where someone could not be present at the time of death, death being experienced as sudden or unexpected, or people dying before they ordinarily would have. It is expected that there will be a significant increase in the need for bereavement support and counselling in the weeks and months to come and that some of these bereaved relatives may present with complicated or

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disenfranchised grief. Many people may have questions about their relative's care, or around the time of death. Social Workers are skilled communicators with the appropriate competence in grief and loss to support this work and provide a range of bereavement care for individuals and families. However, there will be a need for additional resources to meet the anticipated need and social workers should be appointed as part of the range of supports.

59 in favour – 2 abstentions – 2 against

Motion 3 – CARRIED

Proposed by: Anne O'Loughlin, SIGA **Seconded by:** Aidan Cooney, ASaP
On behalf of SIGA & Adult Safeguarding Associate Group.

That IASW will write to the Minister for Justice requesting that before any legislation is commenced regarding the Dying with Dignity Bill No 24 of 2020 that a legislative and regulatory framework is in place to protect a person's right to life, basic legal rights to independent living, social care services, health services and palliative care. That the proposed legislation is compliant with supported decision-making as outlined in the Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act 2015 (which must be fully implemented) regarding the person's free informed and unambiguous decision at the time of signing the declaration (S.9) and at the time the assistance in dying is rendered (S.11).

Explanation: The Dying with Dignity Bill No 4 of 2020 is before the Dail at 3rd Stage/ Committee Stage. The Bill is concerned with fundamental issues of human rights and solidarity. Debate must have utmost regard for the complexity and sensitivity being considered. The IASW motion is based on the need for a legal and regulatory framework to be in place before any legislation is passed that protects a person's right to life, health, palliative care, and participation in decision making and procedural safeguards around decision making.

43 in favour - 9 abstentions - 8 against

Motion 4

Proposed by: Kerry Cuskelly
Seconded by: Sinead McGarry

That the IASW Board commit to conducting a scoping exercise to determine the best approach to undertaking a governance review of the Association, to include consultation & feedback to members.

Explanation: The IASW recently invested in developing a comprehensive and impressive advocacy strategy for the association in conjunction with Kelleher O'Meara consultancy. The strategy recommends, amongst other things that, "The focus of IASW's Special Interest Groups would shift from being interest-based to being issue-based and that their structure within IASW's overall governance is reviewed". In light of this it would be prudent to conduct a full governance review of the association including, but not limited to, constitution, SIGS, associate groups, working groups, council, board, to ensure the association is fit for purpose moving forward and can fully implement the

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excellent advocacy strategy and statement the association now hosts.

54 in favour
5 abstentions
3 against
Motion was carried.

Motion 5

Proposed by: Paul McCarthy

Seconded by: Kerry Cuskelly

That the IASW, in recognition of its centrality to Social Work Values, Ethics and Practice, initiate a campaign for the reinstatement of the term 'Human Rights' in the Social Workers Registration Board (CORU) Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics.

Explanation: The forward to CORU's original Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers (Byelaw 2011 - S.I. 143 of 2011) states "Social Work is a profession based on principles of human rights and social justice". In referencing "The social work values informing the code", item number 1 on the list of "particular duties" of Social Workers is to "Uphold human rights in your practice". Furthermore, in the original CORU Code, again at the top of the list, in the "Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance Expected of Registered Social Workers", under the heading "Respect for the inherent dignity and worth of persons", item number 1 is: "Upholding human rights in your practice"; elaborating to describe how Social Workers "should uphold human rights" in their practice. Additionally, item number 9, in this same list, states that Social Workers "are responsible for acting in the best interests of service users" and, as such, that Social Workers, "must... work in line with the principles of human rights and social justice". Indeed, in total there are 6 separate references to 'Human Rights' in CORU's original 2011 Code. The International Federation of Social Workers' definition of Social Work states: "Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to Social Work". The IFSW's definition of Social Work is a beacon to Social Work practitioners across the world, many of whom tenaciously hold onto the values embodied in this definition, none more so than those working in extremely difficult, precarious, and oppressive social and political conditions. Irish Social Workers, too, also have a deep-rooted fidelity to the IFSW's definition, exemplified by the inclusion, verbatim, of the above quoted sentence in the IASW's newly revised Code of Ethics', launched just last month. Indeed, in its Social Work Values Statement, the IASW's new Code further notes, that "Society has an obligation to pursue justice, in all its forms, on behalf of every person including the assertion and protection of their human rights"; and again 'Human Rights' is referenced in item number 1 of the Code's Principles of Social Work Practice. Additionally, the IASW's newly revised Code of Practice, also references 'Human Rights' noting that members must "Protect and promote the human rights of those who use social work services". As a further illustration of the significance of 'Human Rights' to Social Work, the phrase 'Human Rights' is referred to on 16 occasions in the 16-page British Association of Social Workers' 'Code of Ethics for Social Work: Statement of Principles'. However, as we now know, albeit for reasons which remain speculative, there is no mention or reference to 'Human Rights' in CORU's revised Code of Professional Conduct and

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Ethics (2019). Aside from the inherent and inextricable relationship of 'Human Rights' to Social Work Values, Ethics and Practice, and indeed that the very concept of 'Human Rights' is interwoven into the very fabric, narrative and history of Social Work, the removal of any reference to 'Human Rights' in CORU's Code of Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers is extraordinary; not only in terms of the act of removing the phrase 'Human Rights' from the Code itself, but also, and more significantly, its effective altering of the narrative and meaning of Social Work in Ireland. This by the body which governs Social Work in Ireland, and to which Social Workers in Ireland must be registered with to practice. As such opposition of Irish Social Workers to its removal, as represented by this motion, is an important and critical stance for the IASW, on behalf of Social Workers in Ireland, to take. The removal of 'Human Rights' from CORU's Code has implications for how we, as Social Workers, both individually and collectively, understand, frame and practice our profession, a profession which, we understand, at its heart, encompasses a fundamental commitment to 'Human Rights'. As Social Workers we pride ourselves in working democratically, in partnership and co-operatively, facilitating, advocating, and challenging. We now have a duty to challenge the removal of 'Human Rights' from the Code governing our profession, and we have a responsibility to campaign to ensure it is reinstated. Given the global landscape dominated by increasing inequality, a worsening climate crisis and the Covid19 pandemic, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission maintain that "it is more important than ever that we adhere to clear human rights and equality values in our deliberations and decision-making". "Social Work bereft of the commitment to human rights is like a footballer who is no longer able to run and kick the ball" (Garrett, 2021).

**56 in favour
3 abstentions
3 against
Motion was carried.**

Motion 6

Proposed by: Kate McCaffery

Seconded by: Susan Doherty

The Working group looking at the role of social work with Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Services proposes that the members support the proposed Statement of Position.

Explanation: This statement of position and supporting documents are in draft form currently, however, we are aiming to have this work completed by the end of May/beginning of June and the working group are keen that statement be ratified and published by the board as soon as is possible. This statement is a first step in encouraging Irish social workers to consider the needs of TGNC service users and to identify, seek and become involved in these referrals. The draft statement of position is as follows: It is the position of IASW that Social Worker have essential roles, both to the individual and across wider society, in: taking an affirming clinical position which acknowledges the diversity of gender and provides unconditional positive regard for all gender identities and expressions – a position which honours and supports the integrity, diversity, and worth of each service user, as well as the right of all individuals to live

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authentically. Providing care and support to TGNC individuals across all health and social care services, so that they may fully participate in social, educational, occupational, and economic life. Developing Transgender/ Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC)-specific competency in areas of particular relevance to TGNC service user's wellbeing, such as engagement, clinical assessment, support, and intervention delivering services and interventions to TGNC service users that are culturally competent, developmentally appropriate, and trans-affirmative which enrich individual, family, and collective wellbeing. Engaging in advocacy activities to address barriers and inequalities that exist in organisations and society. Upholding human rights and social justice, including support for TGNC service users based on that community's identified needs. Developing, promoting, and implementing social policies aimed at promoting social justice and improving social conditions and equality for TGNC individuals, their families, groups, and communities. It is the position of the IASW that social work services should be accessible to TGNC service users, regardless of their stage and type of transition, both as part of a specialised multi-disciplinary team and/or as part of a social work caseload in other TGNC non-specialist teams in in-patient and community-based services.

58 in favour
4 abstentions
2 against
Motion was carried.

AGM MOTIONS 2020

Motion 1

Proposed by: Aine McGuirk, Chair of the IASW
Seconded by: John Brennan, Vice-Chair of the IASW
On behalf of the IASW Board of Directors

That the members of IASW formally adopt the revised and updated versions of the IASW Code of Ethics and Code of Practice.

Explanation: At the AGM of the IASW on the 10th May 2019, grave concerns were expressed about the new revision of the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers. Following a motion at that AGM, the IASW contacted CORU regarding this matter. CORU replied to this letter on July 24th, 2019 stating that they would not change their code. The IASW decided to go ahead with revising and updating its own codes which would reference CORU's Code and align it to the core principles of social work as laid down by the International Federation of Social Workers' Statement of Ethical Principles. The draft documents before you are the result of that redrafting.

47 in favour
No abstentions
1 against
Motion was carried

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Motion 2

Proposed by: Dr. Colletta Dalikeni, Board Member of the IASW

Seconded by: Oluomade Olusa & Evelyn Oboh, Members of the IASW

That the IASW incorporates learning about Racism, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion into its CPD activities and advocate for updating current social work education curriculum and practice to include other world views, diverse knowledge systems, and intervention methods that reflect the multicultural makeup of Ireland today.

In particular we believe it is crucial that the IASW provides a platform for ongoing discussion of 'Racism' in social work which is a reality for those who experience it both social workers and service users and encourage learning that helps Social Workers challenge systems and professional practice that perpetuate racism in Ireland.

Explanation: This motion comes on foot of two global pandemics: The 'Racism Pandemic' (Death of George Floyd) and Corvid 19 (Disproportionate number of Black and Ethnic minorities dying from the corona virus due to lack of access to quality health care and other supports). The brutal homicide of George Floyd in Minneapolis in the hands of White US police officers has resulted in a global response and outcry to an issue that is the elephant in the room but nevertheless least spoken about in the public arena in our society. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in his speech in the Dáil Éireann on the 4th of June 2020 and again on the 11th of June 2020 on 2FM acknowledged the existence of Racism in Irish society and has committed to the enactment of hate crime legislation and anti-racism public awareness campaign in the future.

As part of a racist society social work in Ireland is not immune to racism. Various Irish scholars have lamented the existence of racism in social work practice guidelines (Christie 2010)

The disproportionate high number of Black African families in childcare proceedings was highlighted in the Child Care Law Reporting Project by Carol Coulter in (2013). That 'African families are 20 times more likely to find themselves in the childcare courts than other members of Irish Society' is a cause for concern. The report highlighted that no easy explanations for these statistics could be provided and that the issues involved were more practice based than a matter for the courts. Misunderstanding in Cultural differences and in conceptualisations of child abuse were however not ruled out as possible contributory factors. Coulter 2013 recommended the need for social work training to include a focus on working with difference.

We believe Social work as defined by IFSW through the leadership of IASW has a crucial role in promoting and supporting development and initiating transformation of traditional social work education and practice to include other world views as represented in the current Irish multicultural demographic profile and the Social Work ethnically diverse population it serves.

We call upon the IASW to join The Irish Network Against Racism in support against Racism and formally request the Government to support the enactment of hate crime legislation without delay.

'Furthermore, given the historical discrimination experienced by Mincéir/Travellers in Ireland, the IASW acknowledges the need for social workers to regularly reflect on their practice using an anti-racist lens. Mincéir have recognition from the Irish state as separate ethnic group and as such Social Work practice should provide space and acknowledgement for diversity in all its forms.

46 in favour

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4 abstentions
No-one against
Motion was carried

Motion 3

Proposed by: Kerry Cuskelly, Member of the IASW
Seconded by: John Brennan, Vice-Chair of the IASW

That the IASW develop a policy that supports special interest groups when engaging in advocating on issues of relevance to the profession and the communities we work with.

Explanation: This motion is asking the IASW to develop an operational guideline / policy to scaffold the work of special interest groups when engaging in advocacy related work e.g. developing position papers, issuing press releases, statements etc on issues of relevance to the profession and the communities we work with. This guideline/policy would seek to ensure coordination of advocacy efforts across SIGS, Council and Board to ensure maximum communication, best use of limited resources and less duplication of effort.

54 in favour
4 abstentions
No-one against
Motion was carried

Motion 4

Proposed by: Kerry Cuskelly, Member of the IASW
Seconded by: John Brennan, Vice-Chair of the IASW

That the IASW develops an advocacy strategy that defines advocacy for social work and advances the social work role in advocacy work.

Explanation: The development of independent advocacy services has led to a questioning by others of the role of social workers as advocates for service users/clients who are vulnerable. Developing a strategy would therefore be timely and would aim to highlight and clarify advocacy as a core function of social work in upholding human rights and promoting social justice.

This motion is being sought following the successful International Committee conference "Advocates and Allies" in 2019. Evaluations from the conference advised that social workers were interested in the association pursuing actions around broader social justice, human rights, and advocacy-based social work values.

58 in favour
3 abstentions
No-one against
Motion was carried

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Motion 5

Proposed by: Kaylene Jackson, Member of the IASW

Seconded by: Donal Gill, Member of the IASW

That the IASW call for a systemic review of all areas of Social Work practice with a view to developing a National Social Work Strategy for the next decade.

Explanation: Investment in primary and social care services has been fragmented and disproportionate across Ireland. There is a significant lack of Social Work in areas such as Primary Care Setting, Local Authorities, Acute Hospital Services, Mental Health Services, Disability, Criminal Justice and Safeguarding. The recent pandemic has demonstrated the implications for social determinants of health and well-being in addition to acknowledging the need for all service provision to adhere to principles of Social Justice and Human Rights. Social Work as a profession is vital to the implementation of such policy and processes based on those principles. Social Work as a profession has become undervalued by the State and undermined in relation to the lack of investment and resource. A National Social Work Strategy is now essential to protect those within the profession and promote recruitment and retention. A Strategy is also fundamental to protecting and promoting the rights of persons who require and necessitate engagement with professional Social Work practice across the multitude of areas of Social Work Practice.

55 in favour

4 abstentions

1 against

Motion was carried

Motion 6

Proposed by: Kaylene Jackson, Member of the IASW

Seconded by: Donal Gill, Member of the IASW

That the IASW support the Decision Support Office in calling for immediate and full commencement of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

Explanation: The Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 will support the work of social workers across many domains in ensuring that the rights and preferences of service users are central to all decision-making and care planning. The guiding principles of the Act align closely with Social Work professional ethics and values and it is envisaged that social workers will have a key role in the implementation of the Act and the work of the Decision Support Office.

59 in favour

2 abstentions

No-one against

Motion was carried

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Motion 7

Proposed by: Kaylene Jackson, Member of the IASW

Seconded by: Donal Gill, Member of the IASW

That the IASW call for reform of the Safeguarding Legislation to give powers of entry to Safeguarding and Protection teams to Private Nursing Homes.

Explanation: All residents of nursing homes, both public and private, and residents in other congregated settings have the right to protection from harm or abuse. Medical Social workers who have supported persons entering residential settings note the lack of statutory support for Safeguarding and Protection teams to enter privately run nursing homes to investigate allegations of abuse or neglect. Recent review of the national policy does not address this issue and residents remain at risk without access to supports and safeguards available to those in public units.

**** Withdrawn ****

Motion 8

Proposed by: Patrice Reilly, Member of the IASW

Seconded by: Aisling Coffey, Member of the IASW

That the IASW calls on the HSE to ensure that social work is included as a core and essential member of multidisciplinary teams working with older people and other adults who may be vulnerable in community, residential and acute settings.

Explanation: In light of Covid-19, and in terms of equality of access and human rights, all adults in Ireland should have a right to access to the support and services of a social worker regardless of their residence or the geographical area in which they reside. Aside from the general risk to a persons' physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing, changes and issues arising from Covid-19's may increase the potential for an older person to be exposed to abuse. This in itself further increases the need for equal access for all to social work services.

**** Withdrawn ****

Motion 9

Proposed by: Linda Curran, Member of the IASW

Seconded by: Elaine Donnelly, Member of the IASW

That the IASW endorse the campaign to revise and amend the CFRA Act 2020 to include all pathways to parentage and ensure all children have a legal relationship with their intended parents.

Explanation: The Children and Families Relationship Act was commenced in May 2020. This gives legal recognition for both parents of some children. The current

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legislation is gender neutral and applies to use of donor sperm and/or donor eggs in an Irish fertility clinic. Outside of that many families are not covered, for example, if a heterosexual couple use a surrogate abroad. There is automatic right to parentage for females and gay male couples that use a surrogate. The CFRA Act does not include same sex fathers, reciprocal IVF, surrogacy, at home inseminations, those who have used a known donor, those who had their fertility treatment abroad and children born abroad.

This has created a vacuum whereby the children within some families do not have a legal relationship with both of their intended parents.

The implication of this is that the parents have zero legal relationship to their children. Further implications for the children involved include issues with their non-birth parent taking them to the doctors and making medical decisions, applying for a passport for the child, if the couple split up they would have zero recourse regarding access and guardianship rights. Children are left vulnerable in terms of maintaining their relationship with the non-biological parent as cohabitation is an essential tenet for guardianship rights. Critically, if one of the parent's pass-away, the other may have no legal relationship with the child. Currently, in such cases the parent would have to apply for testamentary guardianship, and this can be challenged by the deceased birth parent's family etc. It would leave the child in a vulnerable position.

The CFRA Act has started to make some provisions for some families. However, it does not go far enough, and this results in some children being left in a precarious legal position for the reasons previously outlined. All pathways to parentage were not fully explored prior to the enactment of this Act and hence exclusions have arisen.

LGBT Ireland are looking to form an overall alliance to capture all groups advocating on this issue e.g. the equality for children campaign (LGBT), the 221+ group (cervical cancer group), some of these women want to use surrogates and the state won't pay for treatment as they don't currently regulate surrogacy, etc.

The IASW can endorse this campaign by making a statement of support, using social media platforms to raise awareness of the shortfall in legislation which precludes some children from having a legal relationship with both of their intended parents, and writing to relevant TDs and ministers regarding this matter. The alliance is calling for Dr Conor O'Mahoney to be appointed as special rapporteur with a mandate to look at all pathways to parenthood, the statement of support should include this directive also.

33 in favour
17 abstentions
5 against
Motion was carried

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