

2023/24

ANNUAL REPORT



BASW

Northern Ireland

The professional association for
social work and social workers



BASW NI Chair's Report

I am delighted to present my final report to BASW NI as Chair, covering the period June 2023 to October 2024. It is my great pleasure to thank the Committee who have supported me and advised Carolyn and her team to achieve many successes.

In this year we completed the first BASW international study visit to Jordan. BASW NI is playing an active role in assisting the Jordanian association in its development and the support it offers to social workers. The trip provided wonderful opportunities to both share knowledge and learn from the experiences of our counterparts in Jordan.

On 29th February 2024 along with our colleagues from the Irish Association (IASW) we hosted the first All Island Social Work Conference—*Responding to Domestic Violence & Abuse in Ireland North and South*. If you were lucky to attend, I'm sure you will agree it was an excellent day for promoting shared understanding and learning across the island. Our Associate Membership scheme with IASW continues to grow and cements the excellent relationship that we share with our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland.

Our Social Work Professional Support Service has been funded for another year by the Department of Health. The service provides valuable coaching and support to social workers at all career stages and I am grateful to the Department for its continued support.

We were delighted to attend as guest speakers at several Health and Social Care Trust events to celebrate World Social Work Day 2024 and to promote the value of being a member of BASW as the professional association for social workers.

Throughout the year we have continued to promote the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services, led by Professor Ray Jones. Central to this we have been working with the Department of Health via its workstreams to ensure the recommendations are implemented to deliver much needed change for the children and families who use social work services, and the social workers who support them.

We were pleased to see the return of the NI Executive to Stormont on 3rd February 2024. On the day the institutions were restored we were invited to share our views via broadcast media, outlining the need for an Executive with a focus on support for social work services. Throughout the year we have capitalised on media opportunities to promote the work of the Association.

Shortly following the return of the Executive we met with the Minister for Health and his team to ensure social work is firmly placed on the Department of Health's priority list. BASW NI Professional Officer, Noeleen Higgins, also met with the Minister of Justice, highlighting key issues of concern for our profession as part of a delegation coordinated by the Women's Policy Group.

During the past year, BASW NI has also continued its work to challenge the injustice of poverty in Northern Ireland, playing a central role in the Cliff Edge Coalition. In addition, the Association has provided oral and written evidence to Stormont's Communities Committee and written evidence to the Public Accounts Committee stressing the urgent need for delivery of an anti-poverty strategy.

In light of the scope and intensity of this work, it is to my dismay that membership figures have experienced a slight dip in this year. We are working closely with BASW UK to monitor and find new and supportive ways to increase membership in Northern Ireland. I believe BASW NI is the home of social work, and every social worker must be supported to join. My thanks to Noeleen who is so engaged with members and their needs and continuously promotes the value of BASW membership.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the small executive team who work tirelessly for BASW NI—Carolyn, Noeleen, Andy and Linz. Thanks also to Davy Hayes who assisted me greatly as Deputy Chair alongside my Committee who are fantastic advocates for social work.

We were delighted to welcome new members to Committee in September along with our new Chair Davy Hayes and Vice Chairs Janine Gordan and Elaine Craig. I wish you all the best and much success for the next term. BASW NI, you are in very capable and safe hands.

Orlaith McGibbon

Orlaith McGibbon



National Director's Report

I look back over the last year's work of the BASW NI team and committee with great pride, it has been another busy year for us all as we work hard to represent you at a local, national and international level. In this report you will see the wide variety of ways in which we do this, we have split the work across the three pillars of our BASW vision: **for social work, for social workers and for a fairer society**. Orlaith details some of the highlights above, I want to highlight just one more area for you.

Firstly, is the work that we did in Jordan, this has been achieved by four years of relationship building, we have progressed from one-to-one mentoring to a small sub-group of committee and as of 5th of September 2024 we have officially twinned with Jordan. This is a fantastic achievement brought about by the passion and enthusiasm of JASW (Jordanian Association of Social Work) and BASW NI members. We have successfully secured funding from BASW's International Development Fund to build on this relationship with two more exchange trips, one for JASW to travel to NI and a return trip. It is hoped that BASW NI and JASW can continue to lead the way with this partnership in mutually sharing knowledge, delivering training and exploring Associate Membership.

I also want to use this section of the report to add my thanks to that of Orlaith's for all the enormous hard work of the small staff team, Noeleen, Lindsey and Andy, none of whom I could do without! Their skill and professionalism are outstanding.

I also want to say a huge thank you to Orlaith McGibbon and Professor Davy Hayes, our outgoing Chair and Vice Chair. They have led Committee with such compassion, drive and enthusiasm, Orlaith for four years and John for two. I wish to acknowledge that for Orlaith it has not always been an easy journey as for the first two years we had Covid to contend with which turned all our worlds upside down. And then Orlaith had her own health concerns which she continued in her role as Chair throughout. It took enormous courage, strength and tenacity to do so, and we thank her warmly for this. We wish her and John well on their journeys ahead.

It is a pleasure to say that we elected as Chair Professor Davy Hayes and as Vice Chairs, Elaine Craig and Janine Gordon, it is encouraging to say that all of whom were on committee and put themselves forward for these leadership roles. We look forward to working you over the course of the next two years to shape and lead our profession.

I also wish to say thank you to each of the committee members who have given of their time and expertise over the last two years, they are: John Sheridan, Emma Nesbitt, Karen Curran, Avery Bowser, Keith Johnston, Gillian McAuley, Emma McAlister, Bernie Kelly and Ioan Racasan.

Finally, a welcome to our newly elected members of committee who took up their roles in August, an exciting journey awaits you! We acknowledge your activism and desire to make a difference. The new committee members are Grace Rehill, Brain Crossan, Cathy Connor, Rhonda Mullan and Ciara McKillop. We look forward to working with you over the next four years.



Carolyn Ewart

Carolyn Ewart

For Social Work

- Workstream contributions as the BASW representative include:
 - The NISCC Registrants Forum Steering Group
 - The Professional in Practice Post Qualifying Partnership
 - The Social Work Implementation Board subgroup on Pathways into the Profession
 - DOH Stakeholder Reference Group for the Regional Care & Justice Campus Programme
 - Safe Staffing for Older People's, Mental Health and Children's services Steering groups
 - Children's Social Care Services Strategic Reform Programme Legislation & Policy Reform Project Board
 - Northern Ireland Leadership Forum—Carolyn has agreed to Chair this group from September
 - The Cawdery Review Group
 - The Reimagine Children's Collective
- BASW NI also lobbied for membership of the NI Degree in Social Work Partnership.
- BASW NI were an active member of a small group who came together to write a guidance document for the emerging field of School social work and for New Employers of social workers.
- We held meetings with each of the Executive Directors of Social Work across the Trusts and with the leadership group of the voluntary and community sector. We also engaged with the Assistant Directors of Governance as a key partner in reaching more SWs.
- BASW NI continued to meet with the Chief Social Work Officer and her Professional Officers to raise issues directly.
- We engaged with the new Children's Commissioner.
- BASW NI are key members of the planning group for the social work awards group—the event will be held on 26.03.25 in Enniskillen.
- BASW NI and the Irish Association of Social Workers jointly held the highly successful conference *Responding to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Ireland, North and South* on 29 February 2024, attended by c.250 delegates.
- BASW NI participated in the SDLP Health briefing roundtable outlining key issues facing the profession to the NI Assembly official opposition (October 2023).
- BASW NI met with the Minister for Health, Chair of the NI Assembly Health Committee, and the Alliance Party Health team to outline the key priorities for the social work profession in the new NI Assembly term.
- BASW NI responded to the Department of Health and Department for Communities EQIA budget consultations, the Department of Education consultation on the Statutory Guidance on the Reduction and Management of Restrictive Practices in Education Settings in Northern Ireland and the Department of Health consultation of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services.

- Broadcast media coverage was secured concerning:
 - BASW NI's views on the Review of Children's Social Care Report (BBC Newsline 21 June 2023)
 - BASW NI views on the Review of Children's Social Care Report and pressures facing the profession (BBC Good Morning Ulster 21 June 2023)
 - BASW NI's priorities for the restored NI Assembly (BBC News 24, 3 February 2024)
 - The campaign to remove the Universal Credit two-child limit (BBC Radio Ulster, On Your Behalf, 20 April 2024)



For Social Workers

- Student social work engagement across Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and Open University campuses delivering the social work degree.
- The BASW NI and Queen's University Belfast affiliate membership offer was launched in September 2023.
- The Queen's University Social Work Society were supported by BASW NI to host a conference Holding onto Kindness in Social Work (25 October 2023).
- Engagement throughout the year has helped foster relationships with social workers in the statutory and community and voluntary sector via the following:
 - Staff Well-Being Days
 - World Social Work Day Events
 - Social Work Forums
 - Student Professional Development Days
 - Jobs Fair
 - AYE Forums
 - Social Work Leadership Groups
 - Roundtable Meetings
 - Conferences
- Engagement with social workers during the Review of Children's Social Care Services workshops resulted in invitations and wider engagement with their teams.
- Following the launch of the Review an episode of BASW's Let's Talk Social Work podcast provided a public platform for BASW NI National Director, Carolyn Ewart, to discuss the Review recommendations in detail with Lead Reviewer, Professor Ray Jones and Josephine Dowell, a care experienced young person.
- Podcast episodes were also made exploring the work of the Belfast Trust CAMHS service (September 2023), a coproduced training project run by the Western Health and Social Care Trust which equips social workers to better support families affected by addiction (January 2024) and school social work in Northern Ireland (May 2023).
- Engagement with social workers in Learning Disability teams to help inform our response to the closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital.
- Engagement with social workers working with autistic children, young people and adults to help inform our response to the Autism Strategy.
- Participation in the Social Work Leadership Strategy Communication and Engagement working group.
- Member of the Building Research Community group and exhibitor at the Social Work and Social Care Research Conference.

- Professional Development opportunities have been offered via Communities of Practice (COP) and Continuous Professional Development Seminars. These have included:
 - Anti Racism in Social Work
 - Culturally Competent Social Work
 - Intergenerational Trauma and Social Work
 - Self-Care in Trauma Informed Practice
 - Approved Social Work
 - Independent Review on Children’s Services
 - International Social Work
 - Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry
 - Autism
 - Domestic Violence
 - Safe Staffing
- We also established a four Nation Specialist Mental Health Practitioner COP to address the issues affecting ASWs across the four nations of the UK and are about to launch a campaign to address the issues raised by members via the COP.
- We hosted several sessions of a roundtable with the Royal Colleges involved in Mental Health Order work: the Royal college of Psychiatrists, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Emergency Medicine, Royal College of General Practitioners and the Police Federation.
- We undertook a field trip to Jordan in October with three members, the aim of which was to build relationships with the Jordanian Association of Social Work (JASW) and to extend our understanding of social work in Jordan.



BASW NI & QUB AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP SCHEME

Benefit from a 10% discount on the price of BASW membership—exclusively available to QUB social work students & staff



BASW
Northern Ireland



**QUEEN'S
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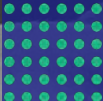
For a Better Society

- Member of the Women's Policy Group which is a platform for women working in policy and advocacy roles in different organisations to share their work and speak with a collective voice on key issues pertinent to social work and the profession.
- Encouraging activism through the student incentive scheme survey, campaign and ongoing research in Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast.
- Participation at Belfast Pride Parade.
- Northern Ireland representative on the UK wide Protecting Rights; Eliminating Restraint Group.
- IMPACT Local Network Coordinator for Northern Ireland in the Anti Racist Strengthening Inclusion Practices research across the four nations.
- Stakeholder involvement with All Party Group on Ethnic Minorities.
- Participation in Rally against Racism at Stormont and a rally in support of strike action by Social Workers as part of the day of action on the 18th of November 2023.
- Carolyn co-authored a book chapter on the history of social work in NI with Professor Davy Hayes of Queen's University Belfast.
- BASW NI has continued to work on the legacy of The Troubles, by engaging in a series of lectures sharing the work carried out on the *Voices of Social Work Through The Troubles*. The first group was held in Belfast and the second was held in Sarajevo, an incredible opportunity to learn from another country and out of that conference we have established a Social Work and Political Conflict Network comprising, social workers, practitioners, academics and those with lived experience.
- BASW NI continued to lobby for the introduction of Department of Education guidance on the Use of Restrictive Practices in Schools, we responded to the consultation which closed in December 23, and have lobbied for the publication of the findings since.
- BASW NI provided an oral briefing to the NI Assembly Committee for Communities concerning poverty and it's impacts on social work on 13 June 2024. The Association also provided written evidence to the Stormont Public Accounts Committee inquiry into child poverty.
- BASW NI played a lead role in the campaign activities of the Cliff Edge Coalition, including production of a range of social media resources and video content to outline the Coalition's asks and the changes required to strengthen the NI welfare reform mitigations.

Carolyn Ewart, Noeleen Higgins and Andy McClenaghan.

23.09.24





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