

OUR 2020 VISION

An update on our vision and aims

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The British Association of Social Workers is the independent and member-led professional association for social workers in the United Kingdom. We are part of the international community of social work organisations, and are active members of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and its European Region.

Our 2020 Vision was published in June 2015 following extensive member consultation. It laid out our commitment to be a strong, independent organisation, well placed to lead and shape our profession by offering a sense of direction and a distinctive, purposeful voice on behalf of social workers and social work practice throughout the UK. This document showcases our key achievements in the first year, which has been a period of consistent and exciting expansion as an organisation, and outlines our plans as we focus efforts on continuing to increase our membership, professional confidence, guidance and influence.

We aspire to be – and to be seen to be – the UK-wide professional body that meets an extensive range of social workers' professional needs, being the voice of the profession and promoting excellence in practice in the context of a commitment to ethics, social justice and human rights, improving society and reducing inequalities.

BASW's 2020 vision is to be:

The Strong, Independent Voice for Social Work and Social Workers

BASW's 2020 Vision is our commitment to develop the impact and effectiveness of the Association and to meet the expectations of our members, potential members and the wider social work and social care sector. This summary update of our activities in 2015/16 presents key highlights from the past year's achievements and looks forward to our ambitions for next year, showing how our strong, independent presence is good for the profession, good for the quality of the services social workers provide and good for the citizens of the UK.

We are driven and inspired by the huge potential of social work to have greater impact for a better society and by the importance of creating a unified professional body. Our values and ethics have never been more important in socially and politically uncertain times and with so many fellow citizens and public services affected by long running austerity measures and reductions in public sector funding.

Social work and social workers need a high profile professional association that can raise our status and public standing, underpin and develop our professionalism, represent social work in the media and other public contexts and promote the best interests of all those with whom we work. With the closure of the College of Social Work (TCSW) for England in 2015 and BASW's instigation of the 2016 Social Work Summit: *Talking About the Future of Social Work*, we have seen new opportunities arise for UK-wide representation of social workers and the formation of cross-organisational partnerships and alliances, including with people who use services and their carers and families. These relationships are a vital foundation for the future development of the Association and our impact.

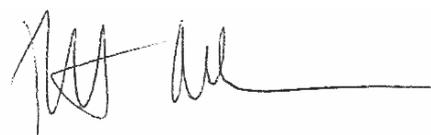
We have seen a significant increase in members over the past year and we have ambitions to see that continue as we work towards achieving mass membership to ensure we have a strong, sustainable organisation. But development of the organisation means much more than increasing membership. It means a wide range of effective member-led activities, high quality professional guidance, robust research, events and learning activities, representation and campaigning and a strong presence in the media. The growth of specialist member-led expert groups (producing professional guidance and critique), member-led branches and member activism in campaigns and media work are combining not only to raise the confidence of BASW's membership but also to increase the sense of ownership of BASW by the profession as a whole.

In 2017 we will launch our new Professional Development and Education (Prof DE) arm of the Association, which will provide a new and reinvigorated focus on supporting the continuing professional development and excellent practice of social workers from all parts of the profession and at all stages of their career. We will support social workers to meet national policy requirements whilst promoting professional approaches and ethical standards that are determined by the profession. As an independent organisation that is not reliant on government or other subsidy we can pursue best social work practice and the interests of social workers without political hindrance or dependency, while still working closely with and influencing policymakers and social work leaders in government and employing organisations.

With the widespread and increasing recognition of BASW's credible UK-wide leadership and policy-shaping public role, we believe we are on our way to fulfilling our 2020 aspiration to be the essential professional membership body for all of social work. We hope you enjoy this summary and look forward to working with you on our ambitions for the coming year.



Guy Shennan
BASW Chair



Dr Ruth Allen
BASW CEO

Strong

We said we would:

- build strength through unity of vision and purpose, and further strengthen the Association by increasing our membership, our services and our influence across the four countries of the UK, in Europe and globally

We have:

- increased our membership across the four nations of the UK by 14 per cent to 22,000 individuals over the past year
- continued to build BASW's standing in the international social work community by hosting the 2015 IFSW European conference and playing a full part in the global delegates meeting and conference in Seoul in 2016 established five new local Association branches in England and one in Scotland, resulting in numerous successful events, including a Refugee and Asylum Seeker themed Conference attended by 180 people, organised by BASW London Branch in partnership with UNISON and the Social Work Action Network (SWAN)
- set in train a programme to review and modernise BASW's internal governance, including a review of our *Memorandum and Articles* and updated, fit for purpose policies and procedures
- established a new charitable governance and operational framework for the UK-wide Professional Development and Education (Prof DE) function of BASW
- formed five member-led Practice, Policy and Education Groups (PPEGs) in England, covering adults, children and families, criminal justice, mental health and professional development, bringing together members of the BASW reference groups and the TCSW faculties to create expert, member-led hubs, which are contributing directly to policy development, professional practice guidance and collaborations with other organisations and professional bodies to strengthen BASW's profile and impact at a national level
- built strong alliances for the common cause of social work, with partner organisations including the Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW), Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee (JUCSWEC), SWAN, the Social Workers Union (SWU) and UNISON to exert pressure within Westminster. These alliances helped influence the House of Lords to overturn key aspects of the Children and Social Work Bill (including proposals that would have enabled local authorities to 'opt-out' of an array of statutory duties governing the delivery of children's social work services) and to make a significant, positive amendment to proposals for a new regulator for social work in England
- seen over 10,000 BASW members (48 per cent) opt-in to SWU, augmenting BASW's existing advice and member representation service with low cost, high value additional trade union services as a BASW member benefit

We plan to:

- increase membership at current or higher rates as BASW positions itself as the leading representative body for the profession across all four countries of the United Kingdom
- deliver a stronger local professional identity through the extension and consolidation of our well-established branch structure and the involvement of members in diverse expert, campaigning and influencing activities
- increase the production of highest-quality professional, policy and educational outputs from member-led expert groups in each country
- improve protection for our members in all workplace and regulatory body situations by raising the profile of our independent advice and representation across the UK and strengthening our partnership with SWU

- strengthen and increase our communications with members, potential members and stakeholders through improvements in use of traditional and new technologies. This includes growing our audience on social media, making our digital communications and website scalable for mobile devices and developing 'in-app' viewing for BASW's publications
- develop our working relationship with governments in all nations of the UK to ensure that our guiding principles – including social justice, human rights, setting the right organisational conditions for the best social work, professional self-determination and respect for diversity – underpin evolving legislation for social care
- modernise our governance further by updating our practices, policies and procedures, making them fit for purpose for a rapidly growing, ambitious and independent organisation that is sustainable for the future
- further consolidate our role and influence within the IFSW at European and global levels and raise the profile of international work through raising the status of BASW's International Committee

Independent

We said we would:

- maintain our independence from governments and from employers in order to be able to act in the best interests of the profession; and put in place robust, closely monitored and regularly reviewed plans for the ongoing sustainability of the Association

We have:

- strengthened financial independence and sustainability by increasing our membership through effective membership recruitment and retention across all four nations
- established sources of funding that enhance our ability to speak and act freely in the pursuit of our vision and aims. These include our published resources: Professional Social Work (PSW), the British Journal of Social Work (BJSW) and Practice: Social Work in Action, alongside membership practice-based events covering areas of special interest, practice development and CPD
- formed partnerships and alliances in the UK and internationally that provide a wide base of support for our activities, and strengthen our ability to campaign and act freely in the best interests of social work, social workers and those who use our services
- hosted the 2016 Social Work Summit: *Talking About the Future of Social Work* – the catalyst for an independent, multi-stakeholder annual standing conference
- developed our relationship with the International Federation of Social Workers, which provides international support for professional self-determination, and hosted the 2015 IFSW European Conference in Edinburgh
- engaged with policy and decision makers at the highest levels across the four nations of the UK from our position of professional independence and self-determination, exerting influence by meeting with political stakeholders and responding to public consultations and legislative updates

We plan to:

- underpin membership growth with a constantly improving, high quality, independent professional service to members. This includes responding to queries; providing advice, support, and information sharing and engaging members in stakeholder, policy, practice and advisory groups in order to draw fully upon practice-based experience and critical thinking
- develop our professional self-determination further through increasing our relationships within international social work, including ensuring the Northern Ireland Association of Social Workers (NIASW) can assist the Irish Association of Social Work to deliver a Northern Irish perspective within the 2018 IFSW Global Conference in Dublin

- increase our opportunities to provide independent representation of social work within our sector, in the media and in the public eye, free of undue external influence or interference, political or otherwise
- maximise our ability to respond independently and collectively on behalf of the profession and represent our members through our committees, PPEGs, branches and publications

Voice

We said we would:

- ensure a strong voice in the media and to governments and agencies, in order to speak up for social work and social workers, and for those people and groups who use social work services. This includes campaigning and lobbying in order to have the best possible influence on policy, legislation and practice

We have:

- promoted and developed our publications, *Professional Social Work, Practice: Social Work in Action* and the *British Journal of Social Work*, and continued to publish and maintain a range of well-informed policy statements and documents to guide members and support best practice
- increased and maintained our presence in mainstream and sector-specific press and broadcast media
- campaigned robustly on issues that impact our profession, our members, and on the welfare of those who need and use our services. This includes NIASW's influential papers and campaigns, *A Blueprint for Change* and *Social Work Not Paperwork*, and promoting *Above and Beyond*, which exposed an annual 'saving' of £11.4 million annually in Northern Ireland arising from the unpaid hours worked by social workers
- challenged the UK Government's austerity agenda within the media and through organised activist demonstrations alongside the SWU, SWAN, JUCSWEC and Shaping Our Lives as a member of 'Social Workers And Service Users Against Austerity' (SWASUAA)
- gathered membership views to enable BASW England to respond to multiple consultation requests informing government policy, including on social work reform, adult social care and reporting and acting on child abuse and neglect
- continued to champion the mental health social work agenda in Scotland through the Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW)'s ongoing commitment to ensure the continuation and organisation of the nation's annual Mental Health Officer (MHO) study day; influenced policy in Wales as part of a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary group on the Social Care and Wellbeing Alliance Wales; broken new ground with NIASW's forthcoming book on social work in the Northern Ireland conflict and spoken truth to power through BASW England's lead on challenging political and media portrayals of refugees arriving in the UK, encouraging a social response to the ongoing refugee crisis that promotes human rights and social justice
- worked co-productively with service users and carers including integrating their contribution into recent conferences, in our inquiries (e.g. APPG, Adoption Enquiry), in the pages of *Professional Social Work*, and in their role as ambassadors for BASW across the four countries of the UK

We plan to:

- continue to consolidate our position as *the* professional association for social work in the UK by representing our members across all four countries, developing our knowledge-base to inform practice standards, drawing insight from research and practice across the UK and globally
- continue to strengthen our media presence and content across all channels by proactively responding to high profile news stories, working to shape the story around practice and acting as a mouthpiece that challenges negative or ill-informed perceptions of the profession across a growing and diverse range of settings

- implement a media strategy for the whole organisation which has been developed in 2016 – and will be rolled out in 2017 and following years – to raise media profile further and start *making* the stories of social work, not just reacting to them
- develop our website further, offering a scalable mobile-first online presence and dedicated social media channels to promote interaction with and between our members, and with the public and wider audiences
- invest in the direct experience of service users to provide a guiding voice in the development of social work policy; recruiting them, alongside sector professionals, as ambassadors and patrons to represent the Association
- become an established and well recognised leading voice on issues of social justice and human rights, ensuring that our influencing and campaigning has impact at UK and country levels both within and beyond social work

Social Work

We said we would:

- ensure that the profession retains ownership of its values, ethics, knowledge, education and practice while defending, developing and strengthening social work as a unique profession rooted in social justice and respect for human dignity and worth

We have:

- developed mentoring programmes in England and recruited 16 volunteer ambassadors and six patrons to represent the Association and social work interests across England and Wales
- launched a UK-wide Adoption Enquiry to consider the role of social work in adoption in light of differing policy developments across the four countries of the UK
- initiated an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry into adult mental health services, supported by BASW England and taking evidence from service users and professionals. Recommendations have been published to inform government policy, advocating a social model for mental health delivered on an equal footing with clinical approaches
- driven, through SASW, the Scottish Social Services Strategy and worked as an active member of the Social Services Strategic Forum to improve the public image of social services across Scotland
- campaigned alongside partnership groups in Scotland on prevention within the Children and Young People Act, Public Bodies Act (integration of health and social care) and Stop to Listen Project
- delivered a separate standard for social care workers within the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's (NISCC) newly launched Standards of Practice for Social Work
- influenced key pieces of legislation and social work education in Wales through BASW Cymru's engagement with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection Act, and through its influential membership of the Minister's advisory panel and Continual Professional Education and Learning implementation group
- fostered relationships with academic institutions in all four countries, supported all aspects of social work education and organised training and events across the Association to facilitate ongoing CPD and lifelong learning
- celebrated and rewarded excellent practice by supporting and hosting social work award ceremonies across the four nations of the UK
- developed the range and depth of social work and care knowledge through BASW's online content management system, Social Work Knowledge, which is home to over 5,000 publications
- negotiated the successful transfer of the former TCSW resources to BASW in the form of the Professional Capabilities Framework, TCSW's magazine *Social Work Matters*, topical reports and the CPD endorsement framework
- established a charitable framework for the new UK Professional Development and Education arm of BASW

We plan to:

- consistently position ourselves as the essential professional body for social workers, shaping policy and practice in support of day-to-day social work practice
- claim our place on strategic national forums and cross-party groups throughout the UK in order to resist any attempts by governments or employers to impose policy or practice that compromises social work, its values or our Code of Ethics
- strengthen and defend the social work profession with rigorously-researched and well-directed campaigns, including our passionate commitment to implementing the findings of the APPG Inquiry into adult mental health services in England in order to establish a better, holistic and person-centred, mental health system
- drive the continued development and scope of BASW's social work knowledge in the form of additional resources, CPD, webinars and conferences and use our influence to support regulation that reflects the range and depth of our professional knowledge, independent of political control
- increase our activities in collaboration and co-production with people who use social work services and their families to ensure social work practice develops in ways that reflect the knowledge and expertise of people with lived experience, and to build alliances around issues of common cause such as the impact of austerity and growing inequalities

Social Workers

We said we would:

- provide professional advice, support for practice and training and development opportunities, supporting social workers individually and collectively

We have:

- established further self-sustaining regional branches across the UK, enabling local members to get involved and inform the direction of the Association, as well as networking and other opportunities
- delivered high quality advice and representation services, in collaboration with SWU, to all BASW members through our specialist staff based around the UK, noting that a 2015 survey indicated that 47 per cent of members viewed the support and protection offered by this service as the most highly desired element of BASW membership
- supported the exchange of international skills, knowledge and expertise through our International Development Fund; awarded individual practitioners with scholarships through the Social Workers' Educational Trust and continued to provide assistance to social workers in times of hardship via the Social Workers' Benevolent Trust
- reinforced the unique role and professional identity of the profession with social work students from 125 universities and training courses across the UK, encouraging recruitment to the Association through attending social work programmes and speaking with students
- supported students and newly qualified social workers with the launch of the Student and Newly Qualified Social Worker's PPEG in England, which took control of our sixth sold-out annual conference for newcomers to the profession
- funded research alongside the Northern Ireland Social Care Council with Queen's University Belfast on *Lessons Learned about Social Work Practice*, to develop a deeper understanding around conduct hearings within NISCC and how they can be used to support professional learning
- raised our public profile by encouraging participation in World Social Work Day, noting that in 2016 #WSWD16 trended at No. 3 on Twitter across the UK as social workers tweeted selfies with BASW's #standupforsocialwork poster

We plan to:

- further enhance the attractiveness of what we offer to members and prospective members (for example training and development, written guides, magazines and journals, as well as individual and collective representation, involvement and activist opportunities) in order to encourage membership as the 'norm' for all social workers in the UK – from student days, throughout their practice, to retirement and beyond
- listen to the voices of retired social workers, drawing upon their expertise and celebrating their contributions in the sector through mentoring and volunteer opportunities within our branches, committee structures and work groups
- continue representing and defending social workers individually and collectively in order to ensure ethical and safe working conditions, and provide protection and defence for members in difficulty, supporting them in disciplinary and grievance processes or when called as witnesses at inquiries
- raise the profile of our advice and representation services, promoting them as 'gold standard' services delivered by qualified and experienced social workers, independent of any external influence
- develop a peer-reviewed 'kitemark' scheme for independent members and organisations providing learning and development activities for social workers to raise and assure standards
- continue to facilitate enquiry and conversations between social workers and with people using our services, exploring innovations, successes and failures in all aspects of social work, in order to promote continued learning and best practice across the profession
- continue to develop support for Independent social workers, recognising their contribution to the development and extension of social work

Next steps ...

Making progress towards our 2020 Vision aims is essential to build the professional association we need for the future of social work across the UK. In the context of increasing social division, austerity, political uncertainty and fragmentation in public and welfare services, our vision aims are increasingly important. Social work needs an effective professional association if it is to have the civilising and social justice impact needed to contribute to the health and wellbeing of our four nations. We will continue to increase our authoritative presence in mainstream and specialist media, enabling the voice and ideas of social work to reach wider audiences as part of developing our impact and representing social work and social workers' interests.

The development and consolidation of our Professional Development and Education (Prof DE) functions will be a particularly important step change for BASW next year. This will be delivered through a charitable governance structure and will complement the other services and country-specific activities and support for social workers we currently provide. This development will ensure BASW has the capacity and capability to fulfil the expectations of a highly effective, grassroots, member-led professional organisation, promoting the very best practice, using and developing the evidence base, enabling social workers in all specialisms to pursue continuing professional development and working across the sector and with partners to ensure the highest standards of practice and ethics.

In order to be a successful organisation with impact in national life, BASW also needs to develop and sustain its core strength as an organisation in all the nations of the UK. Next year, BASW head quarters will be moving to new premises in central Birmingham which will welcome members and visitors into fit for purpose and positive surroundings, serving the four nations and reflecting our confidence as a profession. We will continue the development of our infrastructure and systems to ensure members have an increasingly positive experience whenever they are directly involved in the Association or need to use its services. BASW is, and will remain, for and driven by its members, independent, supportive and leading the way for social work in the UK.

