

Terms of Reference of the Mental Health Reference Group

Including roles and functions

June 11



**British Association of Social Workers
Mental Health policy reference group
Terms of reference and roles and functions**

1. Introduction

The Mental Health Reference Group was set up in April 2011 by the BASW England Committee in order to assist in the carrying forward of the England Development Plan, specifically by providing a focus for mental health. This paper describes the functions of the Mental Health Group, its remit and the processes of its functioning.

2. Membership

The Reference Group will consist of approximately 10 members, who will communicate regularly in a variety of ways, mainly by email and by phone. Members of the group will be BASW members, although non BASW members can be co-opted as temporary members for specific matters. The reference group will develop working groups as necessary and will engage as many BASW members as possible in these working groups.

2.2 The membership will be endorsed by the England Committee and effort will be made to ensure that membership reflects the range of Social Workers in this field.

2.3 Members will serve for an initial period of two years, which can then be renewed for a further two year period. There may be exception to this when it would mean a high number of people leaving the reference group at once. Co-options onto working groups for specific pieces of work are expected.

2.4 The reference group will have a Chair, or convenor and a BASW Professional Officer will offer support. The Chair (or another representative) will represent the reference group on the England Committee. If the chair / convenor is not able to participate at the England Committee a deputy will be appointed.

2.5 The reference group will encourage a wide participation of BASW members in the work of the reference group. This will be facilitated by posting work plans, minutes of meetings and other relevant documents on the BASW web site. In addition, where appropriate, e bulletins and e surveys will be conducted
BASW members can apply to belong to the group, by stating their areas of interest and knowledge. Applications for membership of the reference group will be decided by the group itself. In the event of there being a greater demand for places on the group than vacancies people will be encouraged to participate in working groups.

2.6 Frequency of meetings

The group will meet normally meet annually on a face to face basis and up to 6 times a year by teleconference. The teleconferences are to be held approximately two weeks before England Committees to enable the reference group to respond to appropriate agenda items and to propose appropriate agenda items.

3. Activities

The reference group will:

3.1 Prioritise mental health issues from the BASW England Development Plan and actions to be taken¹

3.2 Respond to local and national issues and developments by contributing to consultations, working parties and groups outside BASW, using alliances with other groups and links with the media.

3.3 Contribute to BASW policy development and to raising standards in Social Work practice.

3.4 Uphold BASW principles on equal opportunities and anti-oppressive practice.

3.5 Provide regular feedback to the England Committee of work undertaken, decisions taken and actions planned and link with other parts of BASW to work together and ensure there is no duplication of work.

3.6 Provide an annual summary of its work for inclusion in BASW Annual Report.

4. Administration

A Professional Officer will take responsibility, in consultation with the chair, for agendas of meetings, recording of meetings, distribution of relevant documents.

5. Oversight

The England Committee may review the work of the Learning and Development Reference group and direct its work in line with the England Development Plan and Association's Strategic Priorities.

6. Roles and Functions

6.1 The Mental Health reference group derives its mandate from the agreement of the BASW England Committee to establish reference groups to support the work of the England Committee.²

6.4 Identifying priorities for the Mental Health Reference Group

The Group will identify each year, in consultation with the England Committee, the priorities for the year. (This process should commence in the summer and be confirmed by an autumn meeting of the England Committee).³

7. Relationship with other BASW groups

7.1 Relationship with the Policy, Ethics, Human Rights Committee

The Policy, Ethics and Human Rights Committee is a UK group, charged with leading on UK policy issues. It is the understanding of the Mental Health reference group that the work of the group would only be referred to the UK group for advice as and when the group deemed it would be helpful. Individual members of the UK Policy, Ethics and Human Rights group could of course be included in working groups of the mental

¹ See Appendix 1

² The England Committee of November 2010 established reference groups to: "...play a key role in deciding on areas for BASW to comment, produce guidance and information and develop policy". In addition "Reference Group members would take part in temporary, task-focussed Working Groups. The working groups will draw in the expertise of BASW members, who may or may not be members of a reference group. Reference groups and working groups will meet face to face annually and to meet by teleconference in between.

³ Priorities for 2010-11 These are described in Appendix 1

Health reference group. The UK Policy, Ethics and Human Rights committee can also request the Mental Health reference group to consider certain areas/issues.

7.2 Relationship with the Policy and Publications Board

If the group produce material for publication (and the concept of publication needs to be defined as to whether it includes publication by internet) then consideration needs to be made to what material is referred to the Policy and Publications Board. Advice will be sought on this issue. However the definition of 'publication' does not extend to discussions taking place on a BASW members-only forum.

Appendix 1

Links to the England Development Plan

The main driver for the reference group will be the England Development Plan. The proposed work of the reference group will support major aspects of the Development Plan. For 2010 – 11 these aspects include:

Objective 1 Recruitment of more BASW members and retention of members. An active Mental Health group should have a positive impact on recruitment and retention of BASW members. The group will be able to:

- provide expert commentary on Mental Health issues
- develop policies and tools on Mental Health issues to support members
- provide advice to members
- raise the profile of BASW in the media therefore attracting people to join
- liaise with other organisations, including universities on Mental Health issues therefore raising BASW profile.

Objective 2 Engage with members. The group should have a positive impact on member engagement by providing an avenue for members to become involved in Mental Health Issues.

The work of the group will provide a service that members will benefit from.

Objective 3 More influence. The group will strive to influence other organisations, Government and other policy makers on Mental Health issues

Objective 4 Policy documents. The Mental Health group will contribute to the England plan to have at least 10 policy documents produced a year. The group will also contribute to hosting seminars / conferences as appropriate.