

## Consultation

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has been working with a number of organisations on the development of a Social Work Research Strategy for the period 2015 - 2020. We are now seeking your views on this draft strategy:

**(Draft) Social Work Research Strategy: *In Pursuit of Excellence*  
Supporting the profession in relation to social work services in  
Northern Ireland**

You can respond to this consultation by e-mail or letter.

Before you submit your response, please read Appendix 1 about the effect of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 on the confidentiality of responses to public consultation exercises. If you require the documents in another format or language please use the contact details below.

Responses should be sent to:

E-mail: [swresearchconsultation@hscni.net](mailto:swresearchconsultation@hscni.net)

Written: Social Work Research Strategy Consultation  
Social Care and Children Directorate  
Health and Social Care Board  
12-22 Linenhall Street  
Belfast BT2 8BS

Telephone: Anne McGlade 028 95363017 if you require a paper copy of the document

Text Relay: 028 95363017 with prefix 18001

**Responses must be received no later than Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

The questionnaire can be completed by an individual health or social care professional, stakeholder or member of the public; or it can be completed on behalf of a group or organisation.

## Consultation Response Form

### Your views - The Consultation Response Questionnaire

Please tell us if you are responding on your own behalf or for an organisation by placing a tick in the appropriate box:

I am responding as:    an individual who is a service user or carer      
                                  an individual      
                                  on behalf of an organisation      
                                  (please tick a box)

#### Details

Name:	Anne McAllister
Job Title:	Professional Officer
Organisation if relevant:	NIASW
Address:	Douglas House, 397 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 3GP
Telephone:	028 90648873
Textphone:	
Fax:	
E-mail:	A.MCALLISTER@BASW.CO.UK

May we contact you should clarification be required on your response?

Yes  or No  (please tick a box)

## 1. Aim, purpose and vision

**Section 2** outlines the aim, purpose and vision of the social work research. Please let us know if you agree with this section?

We would be interested in any additional suggestions.

Yes  No

Please comment

### Comment:

NIASW welcome the publication of a Social Work Research Strategy and in principal are supportive to the aim, purpose and vision outlined in the draft strategy.

We have concerns with the title which implies that this is a Research Strategy for the whole social work profession. The main body of the document, however, makes it clear that it is in fact a Research Strategy specifically for social workers employed in the HSC sector. As discussed on page 23 the statutory sector employ 3,500 social workers, leaving a further 2,200 registered social workers employed in other sectors. NIASW contend that this is a significant part of the work force and as such the Research Strategy should be inclusive of all social workers irrespective of where they are employed. Voluntary sector research activity makes a significant contribution to research and acknowledgement of this, as well as existing research excellence from the university sectors, needs to be acknowledged within the strategy.

Whilst the strategy aims to increase the quantity and quality of social work research NIASW would contend there should be an equal focus on disseminating the research activities which social workers currently undertake in NI. This should be easily accessed and shared across the profession.

Inclusion of the terms of reference would draw out the rationale for developing a research strategy and would allow the reader to more fully understand the context. It may also help with implementation of the aims and vision.

## 2. Where are we now?

**Section 3** explores our current position and highlights a number of perceived barriers to research and evidence. Do you think that the development of the research strategy will help address these?

Yes  No

Please comment

**Comments:**

Yes the Research Strategy will help, in part, to address these. However the real strength will be in a strong implementation plan which outlines how the aims and objectives can be delivered upon.

Within HSC social work many staff are not managed within a professional social work structure nor headed up by a social work director. Therefore the logistics of the strategic direction would need to include such omissions and potential barriers to inclusion.

This strategy is being developed against a backdrop of economic hardship across all of the social work and social care sectors. This has included a reduction in training opportunities and at times lack of mileage payments for those who are willing to travel to access learning and development opportunities. This is also a barrier to overcome.

### 3. Why we need research strategy for social work

**Section 4** provides the rationale for why a social work research strategy is needed. Do you agree with this rationale?

Yes  No

Please comment

**Comments:**

This strategy is also timely in coinciding with the new PiP Framework which has a greater focus on the use of research to assist individual social workers to fulfil their CPD requirements which may also lead in some circumstances to the acquisition of PQ requirements.

### 4. Strategic priorities

**Section 6** outlines 7 strategic priorities presented in the strategy.

Please tick if you agree or disagree with these. Please add any additional comments.

Priorities	Agree	Disagree	Comments
<p>1. To improve outcomes for service users and carers using research and evidence informed decision making at policy, commissioning and practice levels.</p>	x		<p>NIASW strongly agree that this should be a central focus of the Research Strategy. Implementation of this priority will be a key component in making research more accessible and more widely used by practitioners.</p>
<p>2. To ensure the body of research and evidence is easily available and relevant to social work in Northern Ireland, supporting an overall model of research excellence in commissioning, planning and practice.</p>	X		
<p>3. To increase investment in research, evaluation and audit activity</p>	x		<p>This is a laudable aim but difficult to achieve in times of economic hardship</p>

Priorities	Agree	Disagree	Comments
<p>4. To increase the engagement, participation and visibility of social work practitioners in partnership with other professionals in research, evaluation and audit activities.</p>	x		
<p>5. To promote and support a research infrastructure within Northern Ireland which recognises the professional integrity and organisational arrangement for the Social Work profession whilst ensuring any research related activity complies with research ethics and governance standards.</p>	x		<p>Unsure what is meant by research infrastructure. Could this be made a little more specific?</p>
<p>6. To ensure the experience, practice wisdom and knowledge of frontline staff, service users and carers is used to inform proposals for commissioning and investment in research, evaluation and audit activity.</p>	x		

Priorities	Agree	Disagree	Comments
7. To ensure that any research, evaluation or audit activity promotes the principles and practice of personal and public involvement and equality and human rights.	x		

If you have suggestions on any other priority that you think is important please add here including what you consider would be achieved by this.

**5. Equality, Human Rights and Personal and Public Involvement implications**

**Section 7** outlines equality and human rights and personal and public involvement. Please let us know if you agree with the attention given to these issues? We would be interested in any comments.

Yes  No

Please comment

Comments:

A full copy of the screening exercise is included as part of this consultation. Please let us know if you agree with the content of the screening exercise and outcomes? We would be interested in your reasons for this.

Yes  No

Please comment

Comments:

Do you have any suggestions on how the proposals could better promote equality of opportunity, human rights or good relations please give details.

Yes  No

Comments:

Do you have any additional evidence to support the equality and human rights screening activity give details below?

Yes  No

Comments:

## 6. Style and presentation

In developing this strategy we have tried to use a style and presentation that makes the document easy to read and understand while at the same time capture the complex issues associated with research and evidence. Do you think we have succeeded in this? We would be interested in any comments.

Yes  No

Please comment

Comments:

The layout is easy to read, however a little wordy and repetitive at times. The document draws together various strands and other strategies which is welcome.

Inclusion of practical actions/ recommendations would build on the sound principals outlined and allow for translation to practice.

## **1 Appendix 1 - Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations**

The Health and Social Care Board will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Health and Social Care Board can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Health and Social Care Board in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Health and Social Care Board cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Health and Social Care Board should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Health and Social Care Board functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Health and Social Care Board should not agree to hold information received from third parties “in confidence” which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Health and Social Care Board of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner’s Office (or see web site at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>).