



## A Note from our Chair, Vivian Geiran

The current year has got off to a busy start, continuing an ongoing trend in terms of the challenges the Association faces and to which we seek to respond on an ongoing basis. The fact that our membership continues to grow steadily, month on month, is an encouraging sign that social workers see the added value that the IASW brings to the profession and to our members and I thank you all for that solidarity. I also encourage you to continue to support the various initiatives to increase IASW membership, as well as supporting our Associate Membership scheme with BASW-NI, with whom we have such close and important links. I promised in our previous Newsletter that we would soon be in a position to recruit a Chief Operations Officer to head up our IASW staff team and to lead out on the delivery of our strategic plan. I am happy to report that the necessary funding for that is now in place and we will move to advertise and recruit into that new post in the coming weeks.



As part of our collaborative responses to training, recruitment and retention issues in social work, the IASW is centrally involved in a number of initiatives to address the relevant issues. One of these is a new social work apprenticeship programme, which is currently in development and will be piloted by UCC, Tusla and the HSE, in the first instance. IASW has also commissioned a scoping

exercise to consider options for how the provision of practice placements can be supported and coordinated to a greater degree, so that there will continue to be quality practice placements available for all who need them into the future. More specific information on these latter two initiatives is provided below.

The wider context for social work continues to challenge. The war in Ukraine grinds on, with no clear end in sight. The situation in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza, is dire for so many people and a deepening humanitarian disaster. Far too many innocent lives have already been lost and otherwise blighted by injury and losses on a colossal scale. IASW has again expressed our outrage at the actions of the Israeli government, support for our social work colleagues, and called for an immediate ceasefire and access to humanitarian assistance for all who need it. We have also engaged with IFSW and other sister social work associations with a view to amplifying the voice of social work internationally on these fundamental issues of human rights. Closer to home, the country will vote on two referendums around the time the present newsletter is circulated. Our Board of Directors decided at its most recent meeting, not to take a position regarding how we might encourage members to vote. We did however urge members to familiarise themselves on the important issues at stake and to exercise their vote on the basis of informed decisions. Members will also share the growing concerns at the apparent rise of populism and the far-right in Ireland. This has been reflected in some responses to immigration issues and a parallel rise in racist expression and actions, including violence. That is part of why it has been so important for IASW to have recently launched our second Anti-Racism Strategy, at a really positive event in Dublin last month. I look forward to continuing that implementation journey with you all.

This month, we will celebrate World Social Work Day (WSWD) and encourage those of you who can, to do so too. The recent restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and related institutions of government in Northern Ireland is a really welcome development. That positive step virtually coincided with our North-South conference on domestic violence and abuse in Dundalk last week, organised by IASW in partnership with BASW-NI. The conference, which was supported by funding from our Department of Justice and by the Ministries of

Health and Justice in Northern Ireland, was a great success, thanks to the hard work of our respective teams, North and South. Despite the progress on a range of fronts though, we face continuing issues, some of them highlighted above. There has never been a greater need for the Association than there is now. Reflecting on the progress made in so many areas of our work in recent times, I look forward to building further with you all for our shared future.

**Vivian Geiran**

**IASW Chair, SW00319**

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## Social Work Apprenticeship Initiative in Development

All IASW members will be well aware of the serious issues in training, recruitment and retention in social work in Ireland, and indeed in other countries too. IASW published our report on these issues in December 2022. Since then, we have been working with employer, university and trade union partner bodies in various ways to address the challenges involved. One of these responses has been the development of a social work apprenticeship programme, under the auspices of the National Apprenticeship Office. On 12 January 2024, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD and Minister of State Niall Collins TD, speaking of the drive to make more professional education and training available through the apprenticeship model, supported this development when they announced that:

We want to make apprenticeships as accessible and available as possible. That requires us constantly altering and changing what we can offer to people. I am really pleased to see some key areas now moving to this way of delivering third level education. Importantly, this includes paramedics, social workers, roofing and cladding, and a Level 8 and Masters in Civil Engineering.

The development of the social work apprenticeship is being managed by a consortium of stakeholders, comprising representation of key employers and the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) providing social work education programmes, and Fórsa Trade Union. The All-Employers Forum for Social Work (consisting of TUSLA Child and Family Agency, The Probation Service and the HSE) and the IASW have committed to supporting the Social Work apprenticeship, with the employers providing apprenticeship employment. The employers represented in the consortium are the largest public sector employers of social workers in Ireland, delivering social work services nationwide. The

Consortium is chaired by IASW Chair, Vivian Geiran. One of the key aims of the apprenticeship initiative is to increase the number of social workers graduating in Ireland each year, as well as enabling many individuals who cannot currently afford the financial cost of doing so to be supported on their education journey. The established or 'traditional' routes into and through social work education will continue alongside the apprenticeship model. It is also critically important to maintain the quality of social work education and training and in that regard, the Consortium is in continuing contact with CORU on relevant issues.

UCC are the HEI leading out on the first phase of the planned delivery of the apprenticeship programme, with Tusla and the HSE committing to taking on thirty-seven apprentices in social work between them, beginning in 2024. It is planned that other employers, starting with the Probation Service, will take on apprentices from year two onward, adding fifty to the number of apprentices in year two and fifty more in year three and so on. The apprenticeship will incorporate two years university study, including practice placements, leading to a Level 9 / MSW (or PGDSW) qualification, after which those graduating will continue in the employment of their 'sponsoring' organisations, but as social workers from that point on. Entry requirements to the programme will be NFQ Level 8, with provision being made for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The process of applying for, and achieving, substantive approval for the social work apprenticeship programme from the NAO is intensive and is expected to be concluded in the coming couple of months. It is anticipated that, all going well and once the initiative receives full approval to be implemented, there will be more formal 'launch,' including an information and publicity campaign. It is hoped this will happen in the coming weeks. It is difficult to anticipate and answer all the questions that social workers and others may have on the apprenticeship initiative. This newsletter piece is intended as a brief update, in anticipation that the Consortium itself will be generating and disseminating relevant information. In addition, we will keep members informed as this initiative progresses.

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## Scoping Possible Improvement in Provision and Coordination of Social Work Practice Placements

As part of our work with the All-Employers Social Work Forum, IASW has commissioned a scoping research project, to consider options for how the provision of social work practice placements can be supported and coordinated to a greater degree, so that there will continue to be quality practice placements available for all who need them into the future. This is a critical success factor in the goal of increasing the numbers in and graduating from social work programmes. The scoping project is being completed by Kathleen O'Meara, Public Affairs Consultant and is supported by specific funding from Tusla, the HSE and the Probation Service, as well as by the input

of IASW resources. Kathleen has already reviewed relevant literature and interviewed a number of representative stakeholder groups, including employers, universities (especially practice placement coordinators) and others, and her report is expected to be completed in the coming weeks. Once the report is completed, it will be presented to the All-Employers Social Work Forum and the Social Work Education and Practice Teaching (SWEPT) group, as well as being circulated to IASW members and other stakeholders.

**UPCOMING CPD EVENTS**

**SUPPORTING INFORMAL KINSHIP CARE FAMILIES** MARCH 15 12.30 - 1.45PM ONLINE

**WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY - BUEN VIVIR: SHARED FUTURE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE** MARCH 19 1.00 - 2.00PM ONLINE

**IASW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** MAY 29 4.30 - 6.30 PM ONLINE

[REGISTER & LEARN MORE HERE](#)

**SAVE THE DATES**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY** MARCH 8

**WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY** MARCH 19 1.00 - 2.00PM REGISTER AT IASW EVENTS

**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION** MARCH 21

**WORLD HEALTH DAY** APRIL 7

**NATIONAL HSCP DAY** APRIL 17

**IASW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** MAY 29 4.30 - 6.30PM

## Save the Date - Annual General Meeting

Mark your calendars now for the IASW Annual General Meeting (AGM)!

The AGM will be held on Zoom, **Wednesday, 29 May @ 4.30pm - 6.30pm**

Further information will be available in the coming weeks.

Find last year's minutes and annual reports on

our site. Click the button below



[IASW AGM Info](#)

## Refugees Welcome Badges

We were contacted by Molly Power, Social Worker at the Medical Social Work Department, Beaumont Hospital, in Dublin in the context of the racism-fuelled violent events in Dublin last November. Reflecting on how vulnerable those violent events and their aftermath must have left some people feeling, just walking the streets, let alone accessing services, such as social work, Molly and her colleagues got to thinking about how IASW members could show solidarity with all refugees and newcomers to Ireland.



One practical suggestion they made was that the IASW consider bringing out some sort of badge/pin that members could wear on their jackets or work lanyards to show solidarity with newcomers and refugees in Ireland, incorporating a clear and simple message stating 'refugees welcome.' We have taken up the suggestion from Molly and her colleagues and produced this badge, which we have been making available when and where we can. We don't have an unlimited supply, but would aim to make these badges available at IASW events.

## IASW Anti-Racism Strategy

The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) launches its second Anti-Racism Strategy – "Continuing the Journey: The next phase of anti-racism initiatives in Irish social work (2024-27)".

## IASW Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2027

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY:  
THE NEXT PHASE OF ANTI-RACISM  
INITIATIVES IN IRISH SOCIAL WORK.



As social workers, we are always stronger together for social change. Let's put our energy and efforts into eliminating racism from its core. This new Strategic Plan challenges all of us to do more and to do better in dismantling racism in 21st-century social work.

[Read the strategy here](#)

## IASW & BASW NI Joint Conference

On Thursday, 29 March we joined with the north and held an amazing conference:  
**Responding to Domestic Violence and Abuse in Ireland, North and South.**

It was a fantastic atmosphere of building coalitions and contacts. Thank you so much to everyone who came out to take part in vital conversations and share their stories.



## Online Event in Support of Social Workers in Palestine

The inaugural event of Social Workers for a Free Palestine UK will take place on World Social Work Day, 19 March, at 7:00pm to 8:30pm, online. The renowned film director, Ken Loach, will be speaking and it will feature reports by social work practitioners based in Palestine. One of these will be Munther Amira, recently released from so-called 'administrative detention,' having been held by the Israelis since 18 December last year. More information about this online event, and registration to attend, is available through the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/social-workers-for-a-free-palestine-uk-world-social-work-day-online-event-tickets-846912527167>

[Please note that this event is not organised by IASW, and anyone wishing to reserve a place can only do so via the above Eventbrite link].

## Refer a Colleague - Be in with a chance to Win a €100 National Book Token

For every member you recruit, the IASW will enter you into our monthly prize draw to win a €100 'National Book Token' Gift Voucher.

### Member Testimonial:

*"As a new starter into the profession of just one year, the IASW has been pivotal for me in terms of networking, keeping motivated in the profession with ongoing CPD training and being kept informed on such training. The role I am currently in was brought to my attention through the IASW. As a whole, being a member of the IASW has been paramount in shaping my outlook and networking with other members."*

- Amy O'Hara



Refer a Member

## Gift a Student with IASW Student Membership

Calling all Practice Teachers! Consider gifting your students with an IASW student membership to our community, empowering them with networking opportunities, invaluable resources, and a supportive network. Together, let's inspire and equip our future



professionals. Thank you for your generosity.

Gift Membership



## Weekly Round Up - Representations

The IASW is an organisation run by members for members. We wouldn't exist without our amazing volunteers and members like you! Let's see where the IASW was represented this week.



### **Meeting with University of Galway Social Work Masters Students, 5 Mar**

Board Member Majella Hickey met with an amazing group of 2nd year students pictured above. Thank you to IASW member Dr. Declan Coogan for making time for us to meet with your students.

### **Joint NGO Contribution to Green Paper - Alternative Proposal, 6 Mar**

SWAMH Chair, Kerry Cuskelly represented. MRH called for a discussion and potentially even work on some key asks together about what alternatives we see to the current proposal.

Join a Special Interest Group (SIG) to see the opportunities by **emailing us!**

# SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

**ADULT SAFEGUARDING &  
PROTECTION (ASAP)**

**ADULT MENTAL HEALTH  
(SWAMH)**

**ANTI-RACISM ADVISORY  
GROUP (ARAG)**

**CHILDREN & FAMILIES (C&F)**

**CHILD AND ADOLESCENT  
MENTAL HEALTH (CAMHS)**

**DISABILITY (SWID & PDS)**

**FOSTER CARE (SWIFC)**

**HEAD MEDICAL SOCIAL  
WORKERS (HMSW)**

**PRIMARY CARE (SWIPC)**

**SOUTHERN REGION**



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