

# OUR 2020 VISION

Our vision and aims for 2015-2020



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

**T**hese are challenging times for social work and social workers and for those who use and need social work services. A strong independent professional association is needed now more than ever before. BASW is that strong independent association, well placed to provide strong leadership and a sense of direction and purpose for the years ahead. This is why we are now setting out this statement of our vision and aims for the next five years.

We have developed this statement of our vision and aims for the Association by a process of consultation and engagement, in which we have listened to our members, seeking their views in a variety of ways. These have included individual interviews, focus groups and an online questionnaire, augmented by consultations via our network of member committees and with the staff group. A draft document was then presented for further consultation of our members, at our 2015 Annual General Meeting and via our website.

We are now pleased to be able to present this statement of our vision and aims for 2015-2020. It is a document that has been produced by the members of the Association, who will now hold the Association to account in terms of its delivery. Setting out this vision is not an end, but a beginning, and we need now to translate it into detailed plans and, most importantly, actions.



Throughout this document, we rely upon the definition of social work adopted by IFSW in 2014:

**“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.”**

We endorse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948, and the European Convention on Human Rights adopted by the Council of Europe in 1953, and the provisions of these agreements underpin our Code of Ethics and other policies.

BASW’s Code of Ethics states the values and ethical principles on which the profession is based. In particular the code is based on the values of respect for human rights, social justice and professional integrity. The Association works to ensure that its members are supported to discharge their ethical obligations and are afforded the professional rights necessary to safeguard and promote the rights of people who use social work services. People who use social work services may be individuals, families, or other groups or communities.

This framework of human rights, ethics and values create the ethical foundation of our vision and aims for 2015-2020.

## BASW’s 2020 vision is to be:

### The Strong Independent Voice For Social Work And Social Workers

**Strong** – We will build strength through unity of vision and purpose, and will strengthen the Association by increasing our membership, our services, and our influence across the four countries of the UK, in Europe and globally

**Independent** – We will maintain our independence from governments and from employers in order to be able to act in the best interests of the profession

**Voice** – We will ensure a strong voice in the media, and to governments and their agencies, in order to speak up for social work and social workers, and for all people and groups who use social work services, and we will campaign and lobby in order to have the best possible influence on policy, legislation and practice

**Social work** – We will ensure that the profession retains ownership of its values, ethics, knowledge, education and practice, and we will defend, develop and strengthen social work as a unique profession rooted in social justice and respect for human dignity and worth

**Social workers** – We will provide professional advice, support for practice, training and development opportunities, and represent and defend social workers individually and collectively.

## Turning our aims into actions – what we will do

**Strong** – We will build strength through unity of vision and purpose, and will strengthen the Association by increasing our membership, our services and our influence across the four countries of the UK, in Europe and globally

- We will strengthen our governance at all levels, providing effective leadership and direction for the Association as a member-led organisation
- We will ensure that the culture and values espoused by the Association inform and are reflected at every level of our work, both internally and externally
- We will increase our membership in every country and region, with decision-making and resources assigned to the most appropriate levels to achieve our vision and aims, defining the relationship between central functions and our organisations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- We will ensure that our membership reflects and represents the whole population of social workers, including younger, and black and minority ethnic social workers
- We will draw on the experience and expertise provided by retired members
- We will strengthen our partnership with those who use social work services
- We will develop governance in line with increased devolution and ensure that we have strong and effective country committees
- We will regularly consult with and listen to members in order to ensure that the Association is aware of changing needs and demands and that our services are responsive to these
- We will encourage maximum participation of members in the Association's work at country, UK and international levels through the most effective and empowering forms of organisation
- We will offer our staff a constructive and positive work environment, invite contributions at all levels, and ensure training and career progression planning is evident
- We will work in partnership with SWU, the Social Workers Union, to strengthen our presence and our ability to act for our members
- We will manage our human, financial and knowledge resources well, in accord with legal, ethical and environmental values and responsibilities

**Independent** – We will maintain our independence from governments and from employers in order to be able to act in the best interests of the profession

- We will ensure our financial independence by increasing our membership, and by income generation from publications, training and other services
- We will pursue sources of funding or other resources that will strengthen our ability to achieve our vision and aims, and to speak and act freely in pursuit of these
- We will put in place robust plans for the ongoing sustainability of the Association, reviewing and monitoring progress towards this
- We will enter partnerships and alliances with others in the UK and internationally that strengthen our ability to act and speak freely in the best interests of social work, social workers and those who use our services

**Voice** – We will ensure a strong voice in the media, and to governments and their agencies, in order to speak up for social work and social workers, and for all people and groups who use social work services, and will campaign and lobby in order to have the best possible influence on policy, legislation and practice

- We will strengthen our media presence and contacts across print, radio, television, internet and social media
- We will speak out for social justice and human rights and promote the contribution that social work makes to social and individual welfare
- We will listen to and promote the voice of service users and their ability to influence social work and other relevant policy and services
- We will speak out to promote greater understanding of social work, and will respond constructively to challenge and ill-informed criticism
- We will ensure that our influencing and campaigning is relevant and where necessary specific to the devolved policy contexts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- We will listen to our members and encourage dialogue and debate so that our voice is informed and in touch
- We will develop and promote well-informed policies, statements and media releases on key issues, engaging with our members through our committees, groups and branches
- We will engage with policy-makers in government and more widely
- We will promote, support and develop our publications, *Professional Social Work, Practice* and the *British Journal of Social Work*, as the leading voices of social work in print in the UK and internationally
- We will develop our website and our online presence in order to raise our profile and to interact with our members, and with the public and wider audiences
- We will campaign actively on issues that directly impact on our profession and our members and on any issues that affect the welfare of those who need or use social work services
- We will encourage and support country, branch and online activity by members in order to strengthen our voice and influence

**Social work** – We will ensure that the profession retains ownership of its values, ethics, knowledge, education and practice, and we will defend, develop and strengthen social work as a unique profession rooted in social justice and respect for human dignity and worth

- We will actively assert our ownership of our professional values, ethics, knowledge, education and practice
- We will celebrate and promote the awareness of social work in all its forms across the full range of caring, community and human services, including independent practice and in social enterprise
- We will defend the internationally agreed definition of social work and resist any attempts by governments or employers to define social work or its values or to impose any policy or practice that encroaches on or compromises these
- We will promote social justice, human rights and respect for individual dignity and worth in all of our work and in partnership with others, particularly service users and their organisations

- We will actively support and develop all aspects of social work education, from qualifying courses onwards, that promote social work values alongside a critical, engaged and effective preparation for practice
- We will use our influence to support regulation that reflects our professional knowledge and values and is independent of political control
- We will promote our Code of Ethics and other policies, and review and develop these regularly to ensure that they are relevant, adhered to and respected by members and employers, and enjoy wide public recognition and respect
- We will encourage maximum participation of members in developing the knowledge, skills and contribution of social work to social welfare, and to promoting greater awareness of this among other professions and in the general public
- We will learn lessons from innovations, successes and errors across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order to promote continued learning and the development of the profession
- We will seek opportunities to work in partnership with social work and other relevant academics and their institutions, facilitating mutually beneficial relationships between theory, research and practice
- We will develop the range and depth of social work knowledge and practice based on national and international research and knowledge exchange
- We will work with social work partners within IFSW and elsewhere across Europe and internationally to strengthen and defend the social work profession

**Social workers** – We will provide professional advice, support for practice, and training and development opportunities, and represent and defend social workers individually and collectively

- We will encourage and support members' participation in the activities, leadership and development of the Association
- We will communicate regularly with members about their requirements and wishes in order to develop training and other services that meet their development needs and aspirations
- We will support independent social workers, recognising their contribution to the development and extension of social work
- We will pay attention to the needs of social work students and those in the early years of their careers
- We will work to develop comprehensive training and development opportunities that are recognised as best meeting the needs of the profession, in partnership with the BASW Trust
- We will provide networking and other opportunities for members for mutual learning and support and friendship
- We will represent and defend social workers individually and collectively in order to ensure ethical and safe working conditions, and protection and defence for members in difficulty, including those who are threatened as a result of whistleblowing in defence of our values and ethics
- We will, in partnership with SWU, provide the best possible Advice and Representation services for all entitled members
- We will support members involved in disciplinary or grievance processes, or who are called as witnesses at inquiries
- We will campaign for fair reward for social workers in pay and conditions of services
- We will continue to provide the best affordable professional indemnity and access to other insurances for all entitled members
- We will support the Social Workers Benevolent Trust in its provision of financial assistance to social workers in hardship

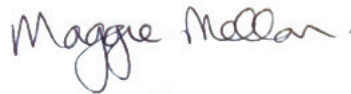
## Next steps

Visions and objectives must be realised if they are to be useful. We will ensure that the vision for the future that we have set out above will be used to develop a detailed business plan, which will set out key aims, activities and measurable outcomes. We will agree with senior management the key outcomes to be achieved over the three years from 2015-18, reviewing progress as reported to Council through clearly set out reporting arrangements. In 2017-8 we will renew the three-year business plan accordingly.

In early 2015, Council agreed a programme of renewal of governance across the organisation. The aim is to ensure that our decision-making is well-informed, timely, resourced, in line with the strategic objectives set out above, and meets our legal and ethical responsibilities.



**Guy Shennan**  
BASW Chair



**Maggie Mellon**  
BASW Vice-Chair



**Bridget Robb**  
Chief Executive

16 June 2015

# VISION

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**BASW**

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

[www.basw.co.uk](http://www.basw.co.uk)