

[Insert Name of Special Interest Group]

Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Irish Association of Social Workers

Group Protocol for SIGS (and as appropriate for other group members of Council)

1. The Group

1.1 Title of the Group

The full title of the Group is [insert name of SIG]

1.2 Aims of Group

The aims of [insert name of SIG] are:

- *To promote the continuous professional development of SIG members [insert area of work]*
- *To provide a national forum for members to share information*
- *To inform SIG members of developments relevant to their practice*
- *To be a voice for the [area of work] client group in advocating for services relevant to meet their needs*
- *To provide Social Workers in [area of work] with an effective voice via the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) in contributing to national policy and legislation.*
- *To contribute to the IASW AGM by way of motions and debate from the SIG AGM*
- *To nominate members (who are IASW members) to represent the IASW on working groups, committees, statutory and voluntary organisations*

1.3 Organisation of [insert name of group]

To hold each year in advance of the IASW AGM, a SIG Annual General Meeting (AGM), open to all SIG members. At that meeting, a committee shall be elected. Each committee should elect the following executive officers; a Chair, Vice Chair and Honorary Secretary.

2. SIG Officers

2.1 Number and Title of Officers

SIGs are not a separate entity from IASW but are core to the Association and are represented at the IASW Council meetings, where they play an important role in offering advice and support to IASW and all the different sub groups within IASW. It is crucial that the members of the organising committee of all SIGs have an understanding of the aims and objectives of IASW. IASW requests that SIG committees have as many IASW members as possible and actively encourage membership. To be an IASW SIG the following members of the SIG committee must be IASW members– Chairperson, Vice Chair and Secretary. Only IASW members can attend IASW Council meetings or represent IASW at any forum.

2.2 The Chairperson

- Shall represent the views of the membership
- Shall preside over the AGM and all meetings of the Committee.
- Shall provide the AGM with a report on [insert group name] activities since the previous AGM.
- Is responsible for drawing up the agenda for committee meetings.
- Is responsible for ensuring that the group complies with IASW rules and procedures.
- Shall be the representative on IASW Council, or arrange for an alternative committee member, who must be a member of IASW/ option of Vice Chair). The Chair must prepare a written report for the Council Meetings.
- Shall set agreed dates for committee meetings for the entire year, at the inaugural meeting held after each AGM.
- The Chairperson shall be elected annually at the AGM, and the sitting Chairperson shall be eligible for re-election as Chairperson, the IASW recommends up to a maximum of three years only, if possible.

2.3 The Secretary

- Shall maintain an up to date database of all social workers who wish to be part of the special interest group, to facilitate timely communication.
- Shall in accordance with rule 3.1 draw up and issue all members a notice and agenda for the Annual General Meeting.
- Shall assist the Chairperson in compiling a report on the group's activities since the previous AGM.
- Shall provide each member of the Committee with the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Shall be responsible for bringing all correspondence to the attention of the committee, and for issuing correspondence on the recommendation of the committee on behalf of [insert name of group].
- The Secretary shall be elected annually at the AGM, and the sitting Secretary shall be eligible for re-election as Secretary, the IASW recommends up to a maximum of three years only, if possible.

2.4 The Vice-Chair shall deputise for the Chair as so required

2.5 Role of SIG Committee and SIG Committee Members

The SIG Committee

- *organises the day to day business of the SIG,*
- *must adhere to the IASW Rules and Bye Laws*

Committee members:

- Shall attend all committee meetings
- Only IASW members can represent the IASW/ SIG/committee on various working groups, but must report back to the SIG and IASW at regular intervals as agreed
- Shall assist in the planning, delivery and review of CPD events.

Committee members shall be elected annually at the AGM and shall be eligible for re-election. The IASW recommends that Committee members should serve no more than six consecutive years, if possible. This is the same rule as for IASW Board members. Reference:

IASW Constitution. Point 54 for six consecutive years, but must step down from the committee for at least one year.

3 SIG Meetings

3.1 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

- The Committee shall decide the date, time, place and agenda of the AGM, and inform the IASW of same. The SIG AGM should take place before the IASW AGM, so as any motions passed by the SIG can be then be debated at the IASW AGM, as per IASW standing orders.
- The Secretary shall send a copy of the motions, agenda & minutes to the IASW.
- Any outgoing Chairperson shall provide the incoming Chairperson with all relevant information and documentation in relation to his/her term as Chairperson.
- Any outgoing Secretary shall provide the incoming Secretary with all relevant information and documentation in relation to his/her term as Secretary.

Note: As per rule 3:2:6 of the associations Rules & Bye-laws SIG's are required to hold an Annual General Meeting.

3.2 Election of Officers and Committee

The committee membership must be open to all the social work grades, and should seek to include members from all the relevant areas of specialisms within the SIG, and whenever possible to include members from the HSE and voluntary Section 38 and 39 organisations, as well as having a good geographical representation from around the country.

- Candidates for the officer positions of the SIG committee should be present at the AGM, and be nominated and seconded by an IASW member within the SIG.
- In the event of more than one nominee for a post, an election shall be held.
- Two election officers who are IASW members, who are not going forward for election, shall be appointed to conduct the election.
- The election shall be by secret ballot, and the nominees shall be appointed by simple majority.
- In the event of a tie, the election shall be re-run following a short presentation by each candidate.
- In the event of a second tie, the chairperson shall have a casting vote, except where she/he is a candidate for the position of chair, where the casting vote shall fall to the secretary.
- Candidates for committee membership shall be present at the AGM, nominated and seconded.
- Those unable to attend may express their interest by writing formally to the secretary in advance of the meeting.
- The committee may co-opt members as appropriate.

3.3 Committee Meetings

Regular committee meetings are essential to the running of the SIG. It is good practice to set the date for the next meeting at the end of each meeting.

The Committee shall meet not less than four times per year and can include the AGM, but more frequently if considered necessary by the committee. The quorum for all meetings of the Committee shall be four (4) members.

Templates for agenda's, minutes, AGM notices, ballot papers, etc. can be obtained from the IASW office.

3.4 Special Committee Meetings/Extraordinary General Meetings

The Secretary shall call a Special Meeting of the Committee or an Extraordinary General Meeting on receipt of WRITTEN requests from four (4) members of the Committee, or on receipt of written requests from ten (10) members of the SIG.

3.5 Absence

In the event of the Chairperson not being available to attend the committee meeting, then the Vice Chair should Chair the meeting. Should both executive officers of the committee be unavailable to attend any committee or annual general meeting, a Chairperson shall be appointed by consensus or by majority vote from amongst those present to act as Chairperson for that meeting, this same process should also apply if the secretary is unavailable to attend.

A person shall cease to be a member of the committee where he/she has been absent from three consecutive meetings without contacting the Chairperson or Secretary in advance.

3.6 Working Groups/IASW nominees

The committee of [insert group name] may from time to time establish working groups to consider areas of special interest on behalf of the committee. Any SIG working group should contain at least one committee member, and that committee member shall provide a report for each committee meeting.

Each working group shall ensure that all work undertaken in the name of [insert group name here] is presented to and approved by the committee.

IASW may request the SIG to nominate a committee or SIG member to represent IASW at a meeting or on a working group, related to the area of interest of the SIG. The person chosen to represent the IASW must be a member of the IASW. IASW will offer support, advice and training as required.

3.7 Sub-groups of a SIG

IASW encourages members who work within a more defined area of practice within a broader area of practice to consider the option of setting up a sub-committee, and have a nominated person who is a member of the SIG committee, as opposed to the need to set up a separate SIG.

4. Communication to external bodies such as Government Departments, National Organisations and the Media on behalf of the Association.

In accordance with *Section 5 of the IASW Rules & Byelaws*; all communication on behalf of the SIG to external bodies from Special Interest Groups or other sub groups or committees

of the Association, shall be approved in advance by the Chair of the IASW Board or its nominated persons. The Board shall be informed by the SIG committees of the Association, regarding any planned meeting with Government officials or senior managers within statutory bodies or national organisations on receipt of the invitation. The representatives of the special interest groups or committees who plan to attend such meetings shall include the Chair or a person nominated by the Board to represent the Chair.

The name of the Association, logo or the address of the Headquarters shall only be used for Association business approved by the Board of IASW/Directors.

5. Representing IASW

Only an IASW member nominated by the IASW Board has the authority to represent IASW at any meeting or on any working group

6. Finances

In accordance with the IASW Rules & Byelaws [rule 3:2:7] Special Interest Groups shall not operate a separate bank account.

The Chairperson and/or their representative can claim travel expenses from the IASW for attending the quarterly Council meetings. To claim personal expenses from the IASW, please review the IASW Special Interest Group Guidelines for Financial Management. A copy of the guidelines and claim form can be obtained from the IASW Office.

7. Alterations to SIG Protocols

SIG Protocols can only be amended, with the agreement of the IASW Board.

8. Conflict between SIG Protocols and IASW Rules

SIG Protocol must not conflict with IASW Rules & Byelaws and Memorandum & Articles of Association.

9. Conflict & Dispute Resolution

The IASW is committed to prompt and fair resolution of all disputes of any nature which may arise during SIG business. Should a dispute arise within the SIG/committee that cannot be resolved, the SIG Chairperson must contact the IASW office. A nominated person will be assigned by the IASW Board to assist the SIG in resolving the matter in question. Should the matter fail to be resolved, then the nominated person will prepare a report for the IASW Board. Please contact the IASW office for further information on our Conflict & Dispute Resolution policy. The decision of the Board of the IASW is final.