

Independents Committee

Terms of Reference

The Independents Committee (herein known as ‘the Committee’) will adhere to the Committee responsibilities as specified in the Articles of Association and Regulations 2018, with specific reference to Article 43

Purpose

The Committee exists to represent and promote the interests of BASW members, to develop and promote excellent social work and to pursue the Association’s overall mission – **for social workers, for social work, for a better society** - vision and business plan within specific context to the interest of independent members (*reference to independent members is deemed to be those who subscribe to BASW’s independent member services*). The Committee is committed to developing BASW as the strong, independent voice of social work and social workers.

Values and Principles

The Committee will promote BASW’s Code of Ethics for Social Work. The work of the committee will be underpinned by this value base and commitment to act ethically, respect and promote equality, diversity, human rights, social justice, professional discourse, and excellent social work practice.

The Committee will lead on matter specific to the independent membership in a collective commitment to the Code of Ethics, demonstrating this, particularly in the conduct of the committee's business and in all its relationships with members, experts by experience and the wider public.

The Committee will adhere to the Code of Conduct for Council and Committees, to ensure members support one another, raise issues, and work together to communicate effectively and maintain open dialogue.

The Committee will adhere to transparent governance processes and will be accountable to the membership. These Terms of Reference will be kept under review by Council on an annual basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Articles of Association and Regulations are the underpinning reference points for these Terms of Reference and should be consulted for details and where there is doubt.

Ratified by Council: February 2024

Review Date: February 2025

Separate Guidance will outline how the Committee meet these standards and provisions.

The purpose of the Committee is:

1. To identify, prioritise the membership offer, services and opportunities BASW provides to and for independent social workers and where relevant make recommendations to Council.
2. To provide a strategic direction for BASW's offer and services to independent members, commissioning work as appropriate to support this activity.
3. To advise BASW of its provision of its learning opportunities to enhance independent practice and career development.
4. To oversee the provision of networks for independent members which are both thematically and regionally focused and for which oversight of the provision is informed from views and requests from independent members.
5. To advise on the provision of business development support for independents.
6. To advise on an annual review of business support resources and services for independents.
7. To review BASW member services data (including the use of the independents' inbox) identifying any gaps and development areas.
8. To ensure agreed motions relating to independent members are taken forward.
9. To liaise with and support the National Standing Committees to ensure the needs of independent members relevant to their countries are supported.
10. To advise on the maintenance and consistency of a UK wide approach approach to the provision of services to independent members throughout the organisation.
11. To support BASW to ensure any commissioned external service providers work within the BASW Code of Ethics.
12. To ensure BASW is outward facing and externally influential across the UK in its work around promoting the interests of independent members.
13. To establish priorities in ensuring these terms of reference are delivered and to set out an annual workplan as part of the wider BASW Business Plan.

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Objectives

14. To provide oversight of the membership offer and services provided to independent members.
15. To provide guidance and advice to other Committees and senior staff on matters which relate to independent members where appropriate or necessary. This may include consideration of issues of equality and diversity.
16. To develop the profile of the Independents within the agreed structure to meet the Articles and principles of BASW as is required of National Standing Committees.
17. To develop opportunities for the Independents to be included in all the organisational structures of BASW to show how independent work contributes to the aims of the association.
18. To communicate developments and any changes in the operation or expectations of BASW to Independents to ensure that independent members transition along with association.
19. To represent the views and ambitions of independent members which are obtained from the activities arranged for Independents.
20. To develop accessible support systems for independent members to respond to the recognised needs and situations for social workers practicing as independents.

Composition of the Committee

21. The Committee Chair will be appointed from the independents' membership, with the appointment being agreed by Council. All other vacancies shall be openly advertised.
22. The Committee may elect a Vice Chair from its Committee membership who will act as Chair in the absence of the Chair or as delegated for matters agreed by the Committee.
23. In addition to the Chair there will be no more than 10 formal members of the Committee who are appointed for an initial 2-year term.
24. Included in this number, there should always be at least one place reserved for each of the four nations. The country representative may be nominated by the National Director of that country.

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25. The Committee may also appoint/co-opt up to 4 additional member, advisors, or consultants to attend Committee meetings for specific purposes from within or outside the membership of BASW. This may include (but is not limited to):
- service user and carer representatives
 - advocacy organisations
 - HEI/academic advisors

These co-options/appointments should be time limited and must be reviewed formally by the Committee after 12 months. They may be renewed for up to six years, in line with the maximum term of other Committee members. The purpose and contribution of non-member appointees/co-optees should be reflected in the Committee work plan and may include voting rights if agreed by the committee members and Chair. The Committee may appoint people to increase the diversity of the committee in respect of protected characteristics. Any conflicts within Committees about whether appointees/co-optees should have voting rights should be escalated to Council for discussion and decision.

26. The maximum term of office for Committee members will be three 2-year terms if served consecutively. The maximum term of office for the Chair will be two 2-year terms if served consecutively. No Committee member can serve for more than six years, unless in extraordinary circumstances, this may be extended for up to six months.
27. The Quorum is 4 members including the Chair or 1/3 of the Committee members with voting rights including the Chair, whichever is the greater number. Only BASW members hold voting rights.

Work Methods

28. The Independents' Committee is a Committee of Council and is required to present a formal report to Council at least twice per year and an annual report to BASW AGM.
29. The role of Council is to either; approve, dismiss, or refer back the recommendations of the Committee. It is not the role of Council to re-open the debate on issues which it should expect that the Committee has debated appropriately, as per its delegated authority.
30. The Committee is serviced by the Business Development team, with an assigned/commissioned co-ordinator.

31. Papers are produced for the Committee by the Executive Lead. These will be made available, wherever possible, to the Committee 5 working days in advance of the meeting.
32. The Chair, with the Executive Lead, will maintain an annual work programme which will set agendas for each meeting and ensure the Committee achieves planned objectives and outputs throughout the year. This must be flexible enough to allow for the discussion of issues as they arise. This work plan will fit within and respond to the overall BASW Council Business plan.
33. There will be appropriate consultation with Committee members by email and/or teleconference in respect of urgent issues with significant implications. Urgent and important issues can be agreed outside of the normal cycle of meetings by the Chair in consultation with the Executive Lead.
34. Decisions of the Committee will be formally made by a show of hands from members with voting rights and the casting vote of the Chair.
35. Committee decisions and relevant non-confidential papers will be made readily available to members.