



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibrithe Sóisialta

ANNUAL REPORT

2008/2009

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Council of the Irish Association of Social Workers 2008 - 2009

Executive

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>
President	Ineke Durville
Hon. Secretary	Vacant
Hon. Treasurer	Donal O'Malley
Communications	Declan Coogan
C.P.D	Frank Browne
Website & I.T	Miriam Mooney
Conferences and Seminars	Ita Long
International Affairs	Vacant
Membership	Vacant
Executive Member	Aoife McGrath

Special Interest Group Representatives

Ageing (SIGA)	John Brennan/Annette O'Callaghan
Child Care	Kirsten Byrne
Child/Adolescent Psychiatry (SW in CAMHS)	Sinead Freely
Journal	Monica Egan
Social Workers in Disability (SWID)	Emer Ingoldsby
Medical	Vacant
Adult Mental Health (SWAMH)	Frank Browne
Student	Vacant
SWIFC	Jean Lyons

Regional Representatives

Eastern	Pat Waldron
Southern	Aoife McGrath

Other Representatives

Children's Rights Alliance	Vacant
IFSW Executive	Monica Egan
NSWQB representatives	Monica Egan / Marie Therese Mulholland
NWCI	Mary Allen
Council of Irish Adoption Agencies	Sheila Gallagher/Ann McCormack

President's Report

The last year has been a very busy year for the IASW. Marie Therese's time as President had come to an end at the last AGM and I was duly elected as President elect. Marie Therese agreed to remain on for a few months to ensure that I did have a chance to get to know the basic workings of the organisation. I would like to thank Marie Therese for agreeing to stay on to give me the time to orientate myself in the role and for being available during the year for information and advice, which has been very valuable. I took over the role of President in the beginning of July.

As outlined in last year's president's report, there had been major difficulties with the Website and data base and the executive had decided that it was important that the IASW employs a full time Office Manager. Annie Moran, who was the part-time secretary, had decided that she wished to spend more time on her studies and was leaving in early November. Following an extensive interview process with the help of Mary McDevitt, Miriam Mooney and Frances Mooney for IT advice, Danielle McGoldrick started as Office Manager in early November. Danielle has been extremely busy from that time to get our website and database sorted out and we hope that will be finalised in the very near future. Danielle has become a very important part of the IASW and I would like to thank her on behalf of the executive for her help with all the various tasks and her hard work on behalf of the organisation.

The work in the office has been ongoing and we have dealt with a large number of queries from members, non-members and the public. Thanks to Monica Egan, we have produced two issues of the journal. I wish to thank Monica for all her hard work on these journals. Aoife McGrath, as the editor of info, has made sure that info has gone out every two months to keep the members informed and I would like to thank her for her contribution and keeping us on our toes.

Ita Long continued her responsibility for training and she has been very involved with the organisation of today's conference. In addition to that, she organised a very well received workshop "Inclusive Practice" in conjunction with GLEN and we are hoping to introduce more training workshops during the year. I would like to thank her for her contribution and input with all activities.

We have launched our CPD policy at the conference this year and I wish to thank Frank for all his hard work on getting the policy to this stage. It has meant a lot of attention to detail and I think that the end result has benefited from his commitment.

The special interest groups have been very busy this year; some of them had eventful years as they had to respond to a large volume of new legislation. A number of special interest groups did highlight difficulties that had arisen for their client group and with the help of Declan Coogan these issues were published in the media. The contribution of the special interest groups

has been invaluable to the executive and we would like to thank them for their hard work.

The IASW has continued to have a high profile this year. Thanks to Declan Coogan who has played a very active role as the communication coordinator we have been able to respond very promptly to a number of issues that have arisen during the year and we managed to highlight issues through press releases, letters and articles both from the executive as well as the special interest groups. Declan has built up relationships with a number of journalists that have given us access to the media when necessary.

During the year the executive supported and produced a number of submissions to government departments that were made in relation to proposed legislation by a number of special interest groups; supported a number of submissions to the HSE in relation to proposed strategies; we were invited to attend the Oireachtas subcommittee on Primary Care; we met with the Minister for Children, Minister Andrews and with the HSE to discuss the role of Child welfare within Primary Care.

I would like to thank all the members of the executive: Declan, Gavin, Aoife, Frank, Ita, Frank, Miriam and Donal for their commitment, support and willingness to help out when necessary. Gavin Mulhall and Donal O'Malley were new members of the executive. They have been active members of the executive and I wish to thank them for their contribution. Gavin took on the role of membership secretary and he is in the process of developing a membership strategy, which will be very valuable. Donal agreed to take on the role of treasurer from Miriam and has worked on this with Miriam over the last few months. Miriam is standing down as treasurer and I want to thank her for all her hard work as treasurer over the last few years. Her attention to detail and organised approach in relation to the finances has meant the finances of the association have always been up to date. I am delighted that Miriam has indicated that she is happy to continue her involvement with the executive in a different capacity.

New challenges are ahead in the coming year. The cutback in services will affect us all and there will be additional pressures on social workers due to the loss of posts; registration is due to start early 2010. It is important that we stand together as a profession and it is encouraging that we have increased our membership this year, which will give us a stronger voice. Keep us informed of any concerns in your area of work and we will be happy to highlight issues on behalf of members or any of the special interest groups.

Ineke Durville (President)

Hon. Treasurer's Report

2008 was another year of change & challenge for IASW in relation to financial management. The Association moves into 2009 with somewhat healthier finances. The small increase in membership subscriptions plus reduced expenditure on salaries helped. Interest earned on our fixed deposit account (almost 2000 Euros) was welcome – however this is unlikely to be replicated in 2009 given falling interest rates.

Salary outgoings will increase in 2009 as we now have Danielle McGoldrick as full time Office Manager. However a full time Office Manager should result in less expenditure on agency, sub-contractors & printing -all of which increased in 2008.

Donal O'Malley has become familiar with the Treasurer's role in recent months and I wish him good luck & fulfillment as he takes it on fully.

I would like to thank current & previous members of Executive & Council for their support & camaraderie over the years. Many thanks also to Orla Cooke, Anne Marie Moran, Belinda Kelly & Danielle McGoldrick. Mary Mc Devitt continues to support the IASW with her wisdom & experience for which I am truly grateful. All in Meade Casey have been supportive & helpful throughout my time as Treasurer.

I hope to continue my connection with IASW especially regarding Web site developments.

Miriam Mooney (Executive Member)

Conferences & Seminars Report

The 2008 Conference took place on April 18th last year.

The title of the conference was - 'Resolving Ethical Dilemmas: Social Work Practice in Complex Cases'. The main speakers for the conference were Professor Chris Clark, Professor of Social Work Ethics at the University of Edinburgh and Joan Cherry, Director of the North side Inter-Agency Project. Afternoon workshops focused on ethical issues within the following areas of practice: the use of surveillance technology in dementia care; ethical dilemmas working within a Medical Model; dilemmas arising where young people assault parents/carers; dilemmas for social work management supporting social workers in complex cases; and the contribution of the Hague Convention in the resolution of ethical dilemmas in international adoptions.

The Conference was well attended and participants gave very positive feedback on the day.

GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network) facilitated an excellent half day training on behalf of IASW on February 20th this year. Odhrán Allen, Director of Mental Health Strategy with GLEN was the facilitator. It was very well attended and the feedback on the day was very positive indeed.

As always IASW would welcome it if members, who would be interested in facilitating conferences and seminars, could contact the office at office@iasw.ie

The more members involved the more that can be achieved. The work of the Conference and Seminars Committee can be carried, out in the main, by email.

Ita Long (Conferences and Seminars)

Communication's Report

The core public relations objectives of the Association over the last number of years has included bringing to the attention of the public the concerns of social workers and of the different people with whom we work and the highlighting of the wide variety of tasks in the social work profession. It seems that when our Association informs media outlets about our concerns and identifies stories that may be of interest to the general public (while respecting confidentiality); we may find an open ear. The following press releases from the IASW were well received and were widely covered in the media: in April 2008, the press releases following last year's AGM, in May 2008 the RTE Prime Time Investigates programme on child protection and family support social work in May 2008 and in January 2009 our releases on the Roscommon child sexual abuse and neglect case. At different times over the last twelve months, Ineke Durville spoke on Morning Ireland and Declan Coogan spoke on TV3 News. Ineke Durville and Gavin Mulhall appeared on Questions and Answers on RTE television. A press release and letter were issued in July 2008 by John Brennan and the Special Interest Group on Aging following liaison with the Executive and Declan Coogan; following the same process in February 2009 Frank Browne and Social Workers in Adult Mental Health also issued a press release and a letter to the papers. Both of these separate press releases were covered in the media.

The wider coverage of issues of concern to social workers over the last twelve months demonstrates an effective public relations policy in operation, insofar as press releases from the Association continue to be issued following consultation between concerned members, members of the Executive and the Communications Co-ordinator. I would like to thank especially Ineke Durville, Marie-Therese Mulholland and the members of the Executive over the last twelve months for their support and prompt response to my requests for assistance with media relations and the drafting of press releases.

An enjoyable and valuable opportunity to represent social workers came through an invitation from the NSWBQ to join them again on a stand at the Higher Options Careers Fair in September 2009. Over three days in September, Marie Therese Mulholland, Ita Long and Declan Coogan took turns in meeting with individuals and groups of Leaving Certificate students to talk to them about social work as a diverse and interesting profession. More recently the diversity of social work as a profession is reflected by the publication on the IASW website of documents relating to the role of social workers in child and adolescent mental health.

The website offers the Association an easy and efficient means of communicating with members and with interested parties outside the Association. I would like to thank Annie Moran and more recently Danielle McGoldrick for their prompt publication on the website of press releases. Over the last twelve months different journalists and reports have made direct contact following a visit to the website and reading through the most recent press releases.

All of us who accept active roles within the Association carry out such work in addition to our social work employment in different services. This means that we cannot as an Association monitor every single media outlet to note whenever the Association is referenced; we really appreciate it when members contact the office by email especially to record any mention of the Association and members' views on such coverage. When speaking with the media in relation to any social work matters outside the field of our own experiences, representatives of the Association rely heavily on the contributions of members regarding concerns and stories that need to be brought to the attention of the public. I would like to thank those members who have contributed to bringing our Association more into the spotlight in a positive manner and look forward to the on-going proactive involvement of members who contact the office to assist us in articulating a view of the Association in the public arena.

Declan Coogan (Communications Officer)

Membership Report

This year as membership officer has consisted mainly of becoming familiar with the existing membership procedures, with Ita Long providing a comprehensive induction and lengthy handover period. At present we have approximately 713 members, an increase from 2008, representing approximately one third of all Social Workers in Ireland.

Previous membership officers have had to devote significant amounts of time on office administration tasks, such as scheduling Real Ex payments and updating the database – this was due largely to the limited administrative support available. The recruitment of Danielle on a full-time basis has dramatically improved membership administration. Another significant improvement in administration is the use of a new database, which will be completed by May 2009, and will allow greater command of member information. Membership Forms were reviewed in the past year to provide more consistency between the Application and Renewal Forms.

Some changes have also been made to the Welcome Pack for new members, to include a copy of the IASW constitution and SIG contact details to encourage participation. Similarly, once the office database is up to date, it will be possible to search the database by the members' areas of work/specialisation with a view to targeting people to become involved in their relevant SIG.

Gavin Mulhall (Membership Officer)

Special Interest Group on Ageing (SIGA)

Chairperson: John Brennan, Secretary: Kristen Murphy

SIGA AGM 2008; John Brennan remained on as honorary Chairperson. Kristen Murphy was elected honorary Secretary.

Meetings; The Special Interest Group met monthly over the past year in the Royal Hospital Donnybrook. The meetings have been well attended and generally lively affairs. We have welcomed social workers employed in an ever-widening circle of agencies and hope that this trend continues.

Representation; Anette O'Callaghan is the SIGA representative on the IASW Council.

Issues of concern addressed by members of the SIGA during the year; Most, if not all of the issues raised in last year's report continued to spring up as agenda items during the year - community social work posts; shortage of long-stay beds; social work and elder abuse, community services for older people; the effects of the severe and continuing reduction in many services; the inconsistencies and inequities within the health and social care systems.

The government's 'Fair Deal' proposals were published as the *Nursing Home Support Scheme Bill 2008*. Social work was omitted (unintentionally we hear!) as a named profession in the assessment process. The SIGA wrote to all Dáil health spokespersons and the Minister for Health and Children to request an amendment to the Bill to include social work as part of the assessment process. We received a number of thoughtful and detailed replies, including one from the Minister that gave us some comfort. In the meantime, the residential care funding system continues to be inconsistent and inequitable. In tandem with this issue, there was much debate amongst social workers and other professionals about the HSE's 'standardised assessment tool' (called CSAR). This tool is to be used for applications for funding/admission to residential care.

The Health Information and Quality Authority's (HIQA) *National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland* were finally approved by government who published the final version on the 17th February 2009. In our annual report last year, we noted that it was hoped to have the inspection process in place by 2009. This may now happen by 2010.

The HSE continued their cutbacks in home care grants, home help and other community based services for older persons. These cutbacks are now widespread and they are having a serious negative effect on older persons and their carers. The SIGA continued to highlight this issue in print and on radio. A joint press release with Age Action in late 2008 received extensive coverage in the print media and some coverage on radio. Recently, the SIGA made a submission to the National Economic and Social Forum's (NESF) *Project on Implementation of the Home Care Support Scheme*.

This review project offered SIGA an opportunity to highlight the increasing anomalies in the scheme. As part of the process, the NESF made a presentation to the SIGA on the progress of the review. This gave an opportunity for a good discussion and information sharing.

A submission was made on *Social Work in Primary Care* to the Oireachteas Committee on Health and Children's Subcommittee on Primary Medical Care.

A submission was made to COSC, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, on *The Development of a National Strategy*.

Advocacy became a topic this year because of the HSE's proposal to set up a National Advocacy Programme in residential care units. This programme involves the employment of volunteers as part-time independent advocates in these units. Members of SIGA with direct experience of this proposal raised concerns about the role of social worker as an advocate for the user of services and the interface between social work and independent advocate. Concern was also raised about the nature of many complex cases that come social work's way and the ability of voluntary part-time workers to engage appropriately.

The SIGA made a written response to the review of the *Protecting Our Future* policy document which now forms the basis for government policy. We also met the Consultants undertaking the review and had a useful discussion with them. The SIGA is particularly concerned that proper social work structures be put in place to provide leadership and coherence in responding to elder abuse in Ireland.

The SIGA had discussions with the Law Reform Commission and subsequently made a submission to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on the *Draft Scheme of Mental Capacity Bill 2008*.

Colleagues in the WISE group worked with the SIGA on many of the issues we engaged with during the year.

'On behalf of the IASW, the SIGA joined with Age Action and the Irish Gerontological Society in writing a letter to protest at the withdrawal of medical cards from the over 70s'

IASW Website; In the coming year, we hope to have copies of submissions, statements, etc., posted on the IASW website.

Engagement with Students; During the year a number of social work students from TCD gave presentations on their research work for their masters' programmes. We hope to foster this development in the coming year.

Projects; The sub-group on 'assessment' piloted a draft assessment document during the year. This was

generally well received and it will be brought to Council in 2009.

Links with other Agencies; During the year, Emer Begley, Research Officer in Age Action, Dermot Kirwan from Friends of the Elderly and Ann Stokes, Research and Policy Officer, Care Alliance Ireland attended meetings of the SIGA.

Community based social work services; Community social work posts were established in more health board areas during the year. However, as with many other services, the process appeared to be ad-hoc and the SIGA is concerned that structures, such as line management, are established to ensure the appropriate development of the service.

Finally; Many thanks to the Royal Hospital Donnybrook for once again facilitating our meetings and to Carmel, Social Work Secretary in the hospital for her continued administrative support. Also, we would like to thank Eamon Timmons and Emer Begley from Age Action Ireland for their support and participation in joint work during the year. SIGA would also like to thank Ineke Durville, IASW President-Elect, for her support during the year.

John Brennan (SIGA)

Social Workers in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Chairperson: Sinéad Freeley, Secretary: Mary Mc Namara. Committee: Sheila Mc Kenna, David Hughes, Lazarus Gildolf. Public Relations Officer: Declan Coogan
SIG CAMHS AGM Feb '09: New committee members: Eleanor Kelly (Galway CAMHS)

Meetings; Since the last AGM of the IASW, our special interest group in CAMHS has had three regular meetings of the national group, 19th May '08 in Sligo, 10th Nov '08 & 9th Feb '09 in Lucena Rathgar. We would like to thank Jackie Leonard and Bernadine Hanratty (Sligo CAMHS) and Mary Mc Namara (Lucena Rathgar CAMHS) for hosting our meetings and facilitating the clinical practice workshops in May '08 & Nov '08. Some members of the committee met on 1st September '08 subsequent to the HSE's recruitment drive, general interviews for basic grade Social Workers.

- 18th April 2008, IASW AGM & Conference. Motions were proposed by SW's in CAMHS. See IASW Annual Report 2007/2008. 2009 motions to be proposed at the IASW AGM on Fri 24/04/09.
- Committee meeting 1/09/08, attended by Sinéad Freeley, David Hughes & Declan Coogan. Sheila Mc Kenna by telephone. Items discussed at this meeting: implications of the project plan agreement (ppa). HSE recruitment plan Declan & Sheila brought this to the attention of IMPACT), guidance document issues (re. section 25 of the MH Act) & improving performance of existing teams document (David Hughes

received a copy of this document which he circulated to the committee).

- At the November national meeting, Sarah Houston (SW in Lucena CAMHS) presented on 'Internalised Other Interviewing with families in conflict'. Sarah's presentation gave an interesting insight into the specialized areas of work SW's in CAMHS have to offer.
- Declan and Social Workers in Mater CAMHS produced an excellent document named: The Role of Social Worker's in CAMHS. Declan presented a draft form of this document at our national sig meeting on 9th Feb '09. This document will become available on the website as soon as the final version has been agreed upon by members.
- Victoria Somers, Principal Social Worker in Adult Mental Health and member of the Mental Health Commission gave a very interesting presentation at our national meeting on 9th Feb '09. The title of this presentation: The impact of parental schizophrenia on children. Vicki is the author of this piece of research and it holds a place in the British Journal of Social Work 2007, number 37.

Meetings with IMPACT; Sheila has committed a lot of time attending meetings with Impact and feeding back the content of these meetings to the national group meetings.

Submission to the Mental Health Commission; The concerns we raised included the following: There is often no access to inpatient beds for children and young people. In some cases children and young people are held in units/wards treating adult patients. The Mental Health Commission's figures for 2006 demonstrate that in that year 64 16 year olds and 133 18 year olds were admitted to adult mental health units. This is completely inappropriate for children and young people and can have a negative effect on their treatment and progression.

While we welcome the human rights provisions in the Mental Health Act 2001 for adults, the 2001 Act is seriously deficient in human rights protections for children and young people. In fact it could be argued the Act and its operation illegally discriminates on the basis of age. The involuntary admission of an adult requires the agreement of two medical practitioners and once admitted an adult has access to review/appeal procedures. These represent effective human rights safeguards for adults. However children and young people do not have access to such safeguards.

We would expect that a child/ young person who specifically requires to be seen by a psychiatrist is assessed by a psychiatrist who is specifically a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist – it appears that this is not always the case. This is not acceptable to social workers in CAMHS.

We suggest that the Mental Health Commission develop guidelines in relation to the role of the different professionals of the multi-disciplinary CAMHS and in-

patient teams in consultation with different disciplines, including social workers in child and adolescent mental health.

We propose that the Mental Health Commission develop procedures for the operation of approved inpatient centres for children and young people. Useful reference could be made, for example, to the regulations governing the operation of children's residential care centres.

We suggest that the Mental Health Act 2001 and the regulations and guidelines based on that Act incorporate the principles of the Child Care Act 1991 whereby insofar as is practicable, the wishes and opinions of a child/ young person should be given due consideration.

HSE National Audit; In November 2008 the CAMHS services within the HSE carried out a national audit.

New Interim Inpatient Unit, Cork; Up until recently, there was no Principal Social Worker on interview panel that was interviewing candidates for the position of PSW at the unit. The panel consisted of a director of nursing, child care manager, and an admin. person – none of which had experience of working in CAMHS.

Committee and Priorities for 2009; I would like to thank the Committee members, especially Declan Coogan, Sheila McKenna, Mary McNamara & David Hughes for all their commitment, time and very hard work.

I would also like to thank the social workers who attended our national meetings. I would like to thank Declan for representing our group in his role as PRO. The priorities of the CAMHS committee for the coming year are very similar to the past years, the main focus continuing involvement with the IMPACT.

Please feel free to contact any member of the committee at anytime re. any queries or info about our role as SW's in CAMHS.

I would like to thank everyone on the committee for all their hard work this past year.

The next meeting for SW in CAMHS 11th May 2009, Galway CAMHS are hosting. Time: 11am – 3.30pm. Venue: Galway CAMHS St. Anne's Taylor Hill, Galway city.

Sinéad Freeley (Chairperson, CAMHS)

Southern Branch Report

2008/2009 was another successful dynamic year for the Southern Branch IASW. The Southern Branch established a formal link with the Social Work Development Unit in UCC and invited Debby Lynch, A/ Director of the Applied Social Studies Course in UCC as a committee member. Also Steven Peet joined the committee as student representative. This link with UCC has strengthened the voice of the IASW Southern

Branch and has allowed us to keep up to date with research and new theoretical approaches to social work practice.

Committee members also undertook regular presentations on the role of IASW to Applied Social Studies Students in UCC. These presentations harnessed increased student interest in the IASW.

Our free bi-monthly CPD seminars continued in the 2008/2009 period. Among these were a seminar from Eleanor Bantry White on Evidence Based Practice and a seminar from Phil Mortell on Working with Aggression. Our CPD seminars continue to draw on interesting and progressive areas of both academia and practice.

Once again the IASW Southern Branch have formed part of the core organising committee for the 2009 Biennial National Child Protection and Welfare Conference with two of our committee, Rachel McCormack and Terry Bradshaw acting as active members of the group core. The conference is titled 'Keeping Children Safe: Critical Times, Critical Issues'. The 2007 conference was a huge success and gained significant positive media attention for social work. It is envisaged that this conference will be as successful with speakers such as The Hon Mrs. Catherine McGuinness, Fergus Finlay and Harry Ferguson.

Aoife McGrath completed a draft policy document on the role of social work which deciphers the duties and best practice in generic Social Work. It is hoped that the document will be reviewed and adopted by the IASW.

Committee members Orla Jennings and Steve Peet are also currently undertaking to complete a draft policy document on Social Work Supervision. This document will be based on best practice and quantitative research. The aim of the policy will be to provide standards in supervision practice and promote best practice in supervision. It is hoped that this document will be completed by July 2009.

Our AGM was held in March 2009. Kenneth Burns, lecturer Applied Social Studies, UCC gave a thought provoking presentation titled; "A 'proving ground' for newly qualified social workers? Child protection and welfare social workers' perceptions of career pathways in social work and implications for their retention". This presentation led to a stimulating conversation on staff retention in child protection and welfare social work. A new committee was formed with new members joining the committee. We hope that in 2009/2010 the committee will move forward with a new dynamism and continue to provide a voice for social workers in the Southern Area. The Committee will further attempt to provide solutions to local issues, to liaise with National networks and to provide a unified approach, in which we hold firm to the belief that *'coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success'* (Henry Ford).

Orla Jennings (Southern Branch)

INFO

'INFO' is an information newsletter that is published every two months. 'INFO' is freely distributed to all IASW members. INFO contains updated information on the work of the IASW executive and council, on Special Interest Group activities, on local, national and international social work events both past, present and future, on public issues relating to social work and media profiles.

As editor of the INFO newsletter the role has been all encompassing and has opened my eyes to the degree of positive social work action that has taken place in the previous term of office 2008- 2009.

In this task as Editor I have been inspired and driven by the ideal that *'behind the need to communicate is the need to share, and behind the need to share is the need to gain understanding'*- Leo Rosten. With this belief I have aimed to share knowledge and hope and provide a sense of unity for Irish social workers in these economically challenging times. I would urge that all IASW members take the time to read 'INFO'; in order to become more informed, to gain and awareness of what is happening in social work in their professional communities, and to consider becoming more pro-actively involved in supporting the activities of Irish social works professional body, the IASW.

Aoife McGrath (INFO Editor)

IASW Office Report

There have been many changes in the office since the AGM in 2008, Annie Moran left the part-time post to continue her studies, and I started as the full-time Office Manager in November 2008.

The past few months have been extremely busy for me, in terms of upgrading our general administration and financial procedures, setting up office systems, updating our database which contains information for over 700 of our members, taking registration fees for 2009, assisting with the 2008 accounts, updating publications, and planning for the 2009 Conference and AGM.

I have also recently secured an intern, Estelle Doyer who will work in the office with me for 11 weeks, starting on May 11th. During this time I hope to work on the general filing and archiving systems in the office.

I'd like to take this opportunity to particularly thank Ineke, Ita & Miriam, they have been a huge help to me in the last few months, and I have benefited greatly from their advice, guidance and most of all patience.

Please remember that the office hours are now Monday to Friday 08.30am – 16.30pm. Thanks!

Danielle McGoldrick (Office Manager)

SOCIAL WORK IN DISABILITY (SWID)

SWID AGM and Conference was held in October 2008 at the Annebrook House Hotel in Mullingar.

The [powerful theme of the conference was 'Living Your Choice' - looking at ways men and women with disabilities can make it happen. Presentations were given on the Assessment of Need Process, Deinstitutionalisation, the Provision and Maintenance of Individualised Supports, promoting independence. Two people spoke powerfully about their experiences.

At the AGM Sylvia Watson took over the position of Chairperson from Theresa McDonagh.

In February 2009 SWID held a well attended seminar on the 'Social Worker's Role in the Assessment of Need Process'. It was unanimously agreed by the social workers present that they would request IASW to present a Motion at their AGM.

The 2009 AGM and conference will be on the 15 and 16 October 2009 in the Annebrook House Hotel in Mullingar.

The SWID national committee is working well as and in close liaison with the IASW. It meets on the first Friday of each month, usually at the KARE offices in Kilcullen.

Sylvia Watson (Chairperson)

Special Interest Group for Children and Families

The SIG for Children and Families had a busy 2008. The SIG was delighted to see new members join both the SIG and the working groups throughout the year. The SIG also enjoyed more interactive communication with members which allowed for information sharing, discussion and debate.

The working groups, looking at issues of Media, Professional Practice and Structural Challenges met regularly through the year. The Media group were kept busy as Social Work with Children and Families came into the sphere of the media time and time again through 2008. The media group worked closely with Declan Coogan and Ineke Durville in responding to and engaging with the media.

The Professional Practice and Structural Challenges group worked on a document with regards to Access for Children in Care and this will reach completion in 2009.

The SIG Committee signed off on a Work plan in January 2009 and aims to strengthen the Working Groups through focused work for the year ahead.

Kirsten Byrne

Health & Social Care Council

The Health and Social Care Council has completed its first term of office having had its first meeting in March

2007. Council members who had been appointed for two years have left the Council and the new appointees will be announced by the Minister for Health and Children very soon. Members who were appointed for four years remain on the Council until 2011.

The Council plans to begin the registration process by setting up two registration boards; the registration board for social workers and the registration board for physiotherapists. The professional bodies were asked to nominate members for the first registration boards and the Council is awaiting the names of those agreed by the Minister to be announced.

The National Social Work Qualifications Board, which will be subsumed into the HSCPC, has been extended for a further year until May 2010. Issues around the awarding of the NQSW have to be resolved before its dissolution.

The Dept of Health and Children sanctioned funding for two posts and these have been advertised in the national papers. One is for Head of Registration and Education and the other is for Head of Legal Affairs.

Ginny Harahan, CEO of the HSCPC, has been meeting with several of the professional bodies. Lately she met with the social care workers and educators at their conference in Sligo, with the Psychological Society of Ireland, the Association of Occupational Therapists and the Association of Optometrists.

The work of the Council is complex and in the present economic climate it is also slow. However with the appointment of new staff, new Council members and members of the registration boards, it is likely there will be a lot of new energy and lots of activity in the coming months.

Monica Egan (HSCPC member)

Social Workers in Adult Mental Health (SWAMH)

SWAMH Committee meet bi-monthly throughout the year, energies were focused on contributing to policy developments in mental health. SWAMH took a lead in encouraging members to consider taking on the role of Authorised Officer (AO) under the 2001 Mental Health Act. SWAMH is pleased to report that a quarter of all HSE AOs are social workers. SWAMH produced a description of the importance of the adult mental health social worker within the multidisciplinary team. (Accessible on the IASW web site).

SWAMH has questioned the recent 28% increase in HSE patient charges. These charges affect not only nursing home patients but also those living in HSE funded hostels and group homes. SWAMH is concerned about both the increase and the manner in which the charge is calculated. SWAMH are aware of large variations in the charges applied in different parts of the country. SWAMH plans to pursue this matter.

SWAMH's AGM in March was also our key CPD event, the focus of which was achieving best practice in working with families affected by mental health problems. Presentations focused on the effects that a parent's mental illness has on a child's development and best practice in psycho-education with families.

Finally our previous executive was re-elected; Damien Nolan as Chair, Anne Duffin as Sec and Donal O'Malley as Treasurer.

Frank Browne (SWAMH)