IASW
Irish Association of
Social Workers

St. Andrews Resource Centre
114-116 Pearse Street
Dublin 2

Code of Practice

Preamble

In our Code of Ethics, the IASW aims to provide members with the principles upon which their social work practice should be based. On joining the Association, members agree to comply with the Code of Ethics.

As it can be difficult in some circumstances to see how these principles can be applied in the workplace, the IASW has developed this Code of Practice for members, which is the practical application of the Code of Ethics to members' professional working lives. This is a recommended standard of practice only.

The IASW can refuse membership to anyone who is proven to have failed to meet these standards but does not have the authority to remove a social worker from their workplace as the IASW is not a regulatory body. However, members and indeed all social workers are bound by the terms of their employment contract and their conduct can be open to scrutiny by a court of law. The IASW recommends the following standards to its members.

Members Must

1. Treat people who use social work services and colleagues with dignity and respect.
2. Protect and promote the human rights of those who use social work services while balancing their rights with those of others.
3. Act at all times with regard to the will and preference of those who use social work services to:
    a. Take into account the beliefs and values of those who use social work services. Consult others with a bona fide interest in the welfare of those who use social work services.
    b. Ensure that social work evaluation of these aspects recognises that factors such as social status, economic power, duress, coercion, manipulation, strong emotions, and relatedness to others can enhance or diminish people's choices
4. Carry out their work to the best of their ability.
5. Have a commitment to reflective practice and to the development of skills to make sense and meaning of what they do on an ongoing basis.
6. Be accountable for their practice and have a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development by taking responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills (as per CORU Guidelines).
7. Ensure confidentiality in all aspects of their work, except when to do so would put those who use social work services or others at serious risk or where the law requires disclosure.
8. Use social media in a responsible way adopting the same professional standards expected in other forms of communication with service users and others (See CORU 2019).
9. Respect diversity and difference.

10. Act in an honest and trustworthy fashion in their work.
11. Support people who use social work services to obtain as much information as possible about matters relating to them including access to their social work records.
12. Support people who use social work services to make complaints if and when appropriate.
13. Explain decisions as far as possible to those who use social work services except in situations where to give information would put someone in danger.
14. Declare conflicts of interest.
15. Be accountable for their practice and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills (as per the IASW Code of Ethics and CORU Guidelines).
16. Take note of workplace policies and procedures both in terms of how they might affect themselves but also how they affect those who use social work services.
17. Make themselves aware of relevant workplace policies and procedures including:
    a. Obligations under Health and Safety legislation. Data protection and GDPR; the acceptance of gifts and money from service users and others; safeguarding of children and adults who are vulnerable; etc.
    b. The legal, social, and economic and policy framework, both national and international, relevant to social work practice.
18. Provide support and supervision to students on placement with them and ensure that social work students are aware of the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice of the IASW.
19. Report colleagues whose practice may be abusive, discriminatory, or unsafe to their employer and if appropriate to the relevant professional body.
20. Report organisational/institutional abuse or service failure to the appropriate agency.
21. Uphold and advance the values and knowledge of the profession.
22. Act to prevent the unauthorised and unqualified practice of social work.
23. Adhere to the CORU Social Workers Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics.

Members Must Not

1. Abuse, neglect, or harm those who use social work services.
2. Abuse, neglect or harm their colleagues.
3. Form inappropriate personal and intimate relationships with people who use social work services.
4. Discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or membership of the Traveller community.
5. Abuse the trust of those who use social work services.
6. Prioritise the interests of an agency or an employer to the detriment of those who use social work services.
7. Take part in actions that may be unsafe for those who use social work services.
8. Use derogatory language about those who use social work services or colleagues.
9. Bully or harass those who use social work services or colleagues.

10. Behave in such a way in or outside the workplace which could reasonably call into question their suitability to work as a social worker or be a member of the IASW.
11. Support commercial products at the expense of professional judgement.
12. Accept gifts or favours other than, for example, small gifts such as a birthday card or a small box of chocolates.