



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibrithe Sóisialta

10th June 2020

IASW Statement on Racism

In the aftermath of the recent brutal killing of George Floyd and other Black people at the hands of the police in the United States, the Irish Association of Social Workers condemns racism in its various manifestations throughout the world. The IASW stands in solidarity with the Black community, with the Black Lives Matter protests and with the National Association of Social Workers in the USA and expresses solidarity and support to NASW at this time.

In particular we stand in solidarity with Black social workers and those of ethnic and minority backgrounds and value their contribution to the profession here in Ireland and internationally, many of whom also face discrimination and prejudice in the workplace and in wider society. As social workers, we must be vigilant to the manifestation and impact of racism on Black and minority ethnic colleagues and challenge beliefs and actions of those persons who devalue, stigmatise, or discriminate against others. We need to challenge and seek to address any actions of colleagues who demonstrate discrimination or prejudice. As outlined in the IFSW Ethical Principles social workers must bring to the attention of employers, policymakers, politicians, and the public situations in which policies and resources are inadequate or in which policies and practices are oppressive, unfair, or harmful. In accordance with the CORU Code of Ethics for Social Workers, we should promote social justice in our practice through challenging negative discrimination and unjust policies and practices respecting diversity, different cultures and values and through advocacy and work towards social inclusion.

Social workers need to take the lead in recognising our own prejudices to ensure that we do not discriminate against any person or group and that our services are offered and delivered in a culturally appropriate manner. As individual practitioners and members of the Irish Association of Social Workers we must commit to self-examination and reflective practice in this regard.

As an Association we commit to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice, to identifying, discussing and challenge issues of race and the impact they have on our organisation and to providing within our CPD programme, training that supports and promotes anti-discriminatory and culturally sensitive practice. We recognise the need to have a more culturally inclusive education and intervention methods and commit to contemporise and 'decolonise' existing Eurocentric social work education and practice, which are no longer relevant to the current Irish social workforce and the multi-racial and multicultural population it serves.

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Social workers in international practice and throughout the history of social work have worked with people in marginalised communities, where constraints such as inequality and discrimination may hamper service user's ability to fulfil their needs. These constraints cannot always be resolved at the level of the individual. In line with IASW principles, social workers will advocate with and on behalf of those whom society excludes and in doing so should engage with service users and facilitate them in contributing their views to such developments. We commit to working with service users to challenge practices, systems, and cultural barriers which disadvantage and allow discrimination to continue.

The IASW acknowledges that systemic racism exists in Ireland and calls for action regarding racism in Ireland in the following areas and will revise the strategic plan to reflect this;

- Given that the 2019 UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) report sets out that the Irish State is failing to sufficiently tackle racism and discrimination and to live up to its international human rights obligations in combatting racial discrimination, we support the call of CERD for Ireland to adopt a new national action plan against racism to replace the Government's 'National Action Plan against Racism 2005-2008' which expired 12 years ago.
- Given the findings of the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights citing the system of Direct Provision in Ireland as a severe violation of human rights, we call for immediate action in relation to ending the current system of Direct Provision and the introduction of a humane reception system for people seeking international protection in line with international best practice. Living conditions in direct provision accommodation have contributed to the vulnerability of residents in these centres during the Covid-19 pandemic and we support Nasc's 'Move the Vulnerable Out' campaign.
- The treatment and exclusion of Mincéar/Traveller and Roma communities needs to be addressed and the implementation of the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) needs to be stepped up through adequately resourced actions by all Government Departments involved.
- The repeal of the 27th Amendment to the Irish Constitution which excludes Irish born children from citizenship and exposes them to the risk of deportation.
- To support the call for the Government to enact hate crime legislation immediately to protect people from various minorities in Ireland, to encourage the public to report racism and other hate attacks.

In adhering to the IASW Principles of Social Work Practice, social workers should use their professional association as a forum for critical debate and dialogue with other professional agencies, the government and the public at large, to advocate for and to promote positive social change. The IASW International Affairs Committee is committed to pursuing the above actions on behalf of the

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Association in challenging systemic racism and promoting anti-racist and culturally sensitive social work practice.

THE IASW welcomes input and further suggestions from all members in furthering these actions. A motion will be presented to the upcoming Annual General Meeting of the Association on 1st July 2020 regarding the IASWs role in promoting positive change in this area.

Statement prepared by The International Affairs Committee (Anna Deneher, John Brennan, Kerry Cuskelly and Aine McGuirk) with consultation with Dr Colletta Dalikeni (Board member) and Oluromade Olusa (Member).

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