



PROFILE AND CURRICULUM VITAE OF NOMINEE

IFSW Position to which you seek nomination

President

Candidate's Name and Country

Ruth Stark, Scotland, UK

Social Work and Other Educational Qualifications (include institution and date)

1970-72 Wolverhampton Polytechnic, Business Studies
1974-76 Birmingham Polytechnic, Diploma in Social Work, CQSW
1994-96 Stirling University MSc in Advanced Social Work in Criminal Justice
Research: *The aftermath of sexual offending in the family: 20 years on*

Professional Affiliations

Lifetime membership of BASW
Registered Social Worker, Scottish Social Services Council

Professional Leadership Experience over the past decade

In 1972 I started my social work career working in criminal justice social work. I broadened my experience in the next 40 years to include working with people with mental health issues, child protection, troubled families, migrant and asylum seekers, people who have been abused in institutions – people who live in the shadows of our societies and feel excluded.

Alongside taking part of the journey through change with the people I have worked with I have campaigned for different ways of working, changes in the law and how it is implemented and been involved in life-long learning.

After returning to frontline practice in 1991 I worked with some of the most troubled people in Scotland who had been abused, institutionalised in hospitals and prisons and helped them return to society often after many years of being locked away. Their journeys led me back to university and some research as a practitioner as I was troubled to understand how to help people make sense of the journeys they were on. My research started and continues to strengthen my work in making sure practice, including my own, is ethical, human rights driven and directed towards helping those with whom I work achieve a sense of social justice, which they have long been denied.

This led to involvement in the Human Rights Commission of IFSW, the joint writing of the Training Manual on the Rights of the Child and my subsequent appointment to the IFSW Human Rights Commission in 2008.

There are many levels on which leadership takes place, at the frontline, helping people tell others about how they see the situation, advocating when finding the language that will help people hear what is being said and campaigning for positive change. All this has to be supported by continuous learning and the presentation of knowledge in a way people can then translate into change.

National Association and Leadership Experience over the past decade

From 1999 to 2013 I was the Manager of Scottish Association of Social Work, part of BASW representing social workers in Scotland

This post involved running the membership organisation in Scotland, listening to the views of members and taking them forward in different situations to be heard by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and the media to influence policy and practice development. This included a major review of social work services, government guidance on the role of the registered social worker and contributing to legislative change.

In order to make sure that policy and practice development meets the needs of the people using social work services virtually every training event or conference we organised – and this ranged from 2-10 each year, we worked with people who use services to make sure our work was fit for purpose.

The association also offers a trade union and advice and representation service so I have worked with colleagues to ensure that members have been supported through difficult times when they have hit obstacles to being able to practice ethically. This has also been a running theme in the work undertaken by the IFSW Human Rights Commission.

Community/Volunteer and Leadership Experience over the past decade

In the 1980's I had a few years of being in a consultancy position and came to realise how important it was to me to retain a practice base in whatever job I took in the future. I have been able to do this since 1990 when I was appointed a Safeguarder in the legal proceedings for children. A Safeguarder is an independent person appointed by the government Minister for Children to make sure that any decisions in the courts about care and protection are made taking into account the child's views and is in their best interest. From this work I have been able to take issues that have then influenced change in policy and practice. I still continue with this work.

The type of development that followed was, for example, being involved in the setting up and on the board of directors of two NGOs – The Family Mediation Service & the Scottish Child Law Centre.

I am currently involved in a number of projects around migration and trafficked people and write reports for courts and tribunals for people who are facing deportation

In June 2013 I was awarded a UK Honour – an MBE for services to social work in Scotland.

Are you aware of the job description, role and responsibilities attached to the position you wish to have within the IFSW Executive?

YES

If the answer is YES, please respond to the following questions:

a) **What are the three most important responsibilities towards IFSW:**

1. To ensure IFSW is properly run to ensure the voice of social work can be heard on the global stage, this includes
 - a. Listening to and developing the work of the federation based on the skills, knowledge and expertise of its members through the IFSW Executive Committee
 - b. Providing leadership for members of the federation to take issues forward for positive change
2. To ensure that IFSW has a competent Secretary General/ Chief Executive to manage the affairs of the federation and support that person in undertaking the policy and actions developed its members and the Executive in line with the governance laid down in the IFSW Constitution and within budget.
3. To ensure that through the General Meeting and periodic communication with member associations the members of the federation are informed about the work being undertaken at national, regional and global levels.

b) **What are the three most important responsibilities towards your Region:**

At the present time some regions are more developed than others and there are challenges ahead to ensure respect for diversity and equality of opportunity to develop a truly global federation. These challenges include

1. Developing understanding between the regions of the journey each is on
2. Developing mutual learning and exchange to support the diversity of development
3. Developing an understanding that by working together we can be stronger on the global, regional and national level

c) What are the three most important responsibilities towards your national association?

Strong national associations are the foundation of an effective global federation. Social Work is a global profession often undervalued by politicians and economists. In each of the IFSW Regions there are some large, well developed associations and some that are just at the beginning of their journey. So there are some challenges including

1. Helping individual members of each association realise the benefits of their membership of IFSW and how it can enhance their practice
2. Encourage social workers to exchange policy and practice developments internationally
3. Help and support new members in the federation and hear at global and regional level the issues that face them, offering support in making sure that the voice of social work is heard at national level

Please demonstrate:

- Commitment to the goals of IFSW as laid down in the Constitution
 - Promotion of inter-country learning through organising two European seminars
 - Involvement in developing IFSW Human Rights issues
 - Promotion of the International Definition of Social Work in review of Social Work in Scotland
- Possession of language(s) capabilities (preferably bilingual):
Whilst English is my main language I have a working knowledge of French
- Identification with the region you represent, mainly by residence, work experiences, and knowledge of the main language(s) spoken in the region:
Scotland, but as an incomer I do not speak Gaelic though have learnt to read some of it!
- Practical wisdom and objective interest in international affairs:
I lived for one year in the USA, have been involved professionally in social work development and training in Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and involved in IFSW Europe from 1993 and globally since 2008
- Willingness and capacity to devote time to assume work responsibilities in the Executive or Regional Committee:
Recently retired from working for SASW (part of BASW) but still active in independent social work to supplement the pension so now have the time to commit to IFSW

- Ability, in so far as possible, to attend Executive or Regional Committee meetings:
As I am semi-retired/self-employed this is not an issue.
- Participation, so far as possible, as delegate of the General Meeting or attendance at IFSW Conferences:
as above
- Any other information relevant to your nomination
IFSW gained NGO status at the UN through the work social workers did in the aftermath of World War II. This long tradition of working with people following disasters and conflict is at the heart of social work practice. It is important not only that we remember this contribution to our societies that was developed by our predecessors but we need to build on that sure foundation to ensure that all people are valued in the years to come.



Ruth Stark

28 April 2014