

Constitution of Irish Council of Social Workers in Adoption

1. Names

The Irish Council of Social Workers in Adoption (ICSWA) was founded in 1961 as a forum for adoption agencies and was originally known as the **Central Council of Catholic Adoption Societies**. In 1996 the name was changed to the **Council of Irish Adoption Agencies** to reflect that the organisation no longer differentiated from other adoption agencies. In 2022 there was a further change of name to the **Irish Council of Social Workers in Adoption** to more accurately reflect the organisation's membership as a result of the closure of most of the original adoption agencies.

2. Mission Statement

To provide a forum for social workers to ensure best practice in adoption through continuous professional development and training and influencing social work policy and legislation.

3. Objectives/ Aims of ICSWA

- To ensure all its members operate to the highest professional standards.
- To provide continuous professional development workshops and relevant training that reflect current social work practice issues.
- To disseminate relevant information and research findings and promote and encourage research.
- To highlight and address relevant adoption practice issues.
- To influence policies in line with current practice.
- To campaign for changes in legislation.
- To advocate on behalf of social workers in adoption to ensure best practice in adoption.
- To promote the best interests of social workers in adoption.
- To provide a national forum for members to share information.
- To be available for consultation with government and non-government agencies.
- To contribute to and co-operate with government investigations into previous adoption practices.
- To liaise with related organisations re common practice issues.

4. Ethics & Values

Members who are Social Workers are required to adhere to (1) CORU Social Work Registration Board's Code of Professional Conduct & Ethics & (2) IASW Code of Ethics and Code of Practice. See www.iasw.ie. Other members are required to adhere to the code of practice of their respective accredited bodies.

Members shall treat in strictest confidence any information regarding any client or organisation or other social work employee that comes to their attention at **ICSWA** meetings and training days. This shall be in accordance with **ICSWA**'s privacy policy and applicable laws including those that require mandatory reporting.

5. Members

All social workers in adoption who are employed by TUSLA Adoption Services or an accredited agency are automatically members of **ICSWA** and can attend Council meetings. Those social workers who wish to opt out of this membership will be advised to notify **ICSWA** accordingly. Social workers /individuals with relevant experience in adoption can become co-opted members.

Adoption social work practitioners who are employed by TUSLA Adoption Services or an accredited agency are required to be currently registered with the Social Work Registration Board of CORU. Social Workers who have retired, are currently not working in a social work post, or who are unemployed, are required to have a social work qualification that is recognised by CCETSW, the National Social Work Qualification Board or to be registered as social workers with CORU.

ICSWA is a Professional Affiliate of the Irish Association of Social Workers. (IASWs)

Equal opportunity Statement

ICSWA is committed to equal opportunities. It recognises and values the diversity of all its members and is committed to providing an environment which will allow every member to participate fully in its activities, regardless of race, gender, family status, membership of travellers' community, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability or sexual orientation.

6. Committees & Meetings & Training

ICSWA shall have a Council and an Executive Committee. The work of **ICSWA** shall be undertaken by the Executive Committee which is elected by the Council and shall report back at Council meetings.

All meetings are chaired by the Chairperson of **ICSWA** or the Vice Chair or a person nominated at that meeting if neither can be in attendance.

The members of the Executive shall be social workers in adoption who are employed by TUSLA Adoption Services or an accredited agency or retired social workers in adoption. Each member of the Executive is elected for a two-year term and can be nominated for election every two years. Members of the Executive select holders of designated offices from among the membership of the Executive. Social workers and individuals with relevant experience in adoption can become co-opted members.

The Executive Committee shall consist of at least **10** elected members, which shall include the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. The Executive has the power to co-opt up to **4** additional members, with relevant adoption experience. Co-opted members shall have voting rights on the Executive Committee.

The election of the Executive shall be at the Annual General Meeting. For voting purposes one social worker in adoption must be designated by each accredited agency and from each TUSLA Adoption Services Area. Nominations can be made for employed adoption social work practitioners or retired Adoption Social Workers. Nominees shall be proposed by one agency and be seconded by a separate agency. All co-opted members must have the approval of Council.

The quorum at Executive Committee Meetings shall be at least four members, two of who must be a TUSLA social worker in adoption, and the Chairperson/Acting Chair.

In the event of a vacancy occurring on the Executive Committee, a new member can be co-opted in their place until election at the next AGM.

The Executive shall hold **4** meetings each year and additional meetings if required.

There should not be less than **2** Council Meetings each year one of which should be an Annual General Meeting. Council Meetings can be held on training days.

There shall be not less than two training events each year which are open to non-members who have an interest in adoption matters.

7. Duties of the Officers

Chairperson:

- To chair all meetings of the Executive and Council.
- To act as spokesperson for ICSWA when necessary.
- To represent ICSWA at meetings with external bodies including Government Departments and Ministers, senior management within TUSLA, other state bodies and organisations, and media.
- To set dates for Council, Executive & Training Days.
- To approve draft minutes for circulation in consultation with the Secretary.
- To prepare agendas in advance of Committee meetings in consultation with the Secretary.
- To bring all correspondence to the attention of the Executive.
- To ensure that all agreed decisions are implemented in consultation with the Executive.
- To prepare an annual report of the activities of **ICSWA** for presentation at its AGM.
- To ensure there is effective communication with members.
- To liaise with the Treasurer regarding the expenditure of **ICSWA** and ensure proper financial governance of the organisation's funds and financial records.
- To liaise with the Treasurer and ensure the year end accounts are finalised.
- To negotiate for ongoing funding and grant applications.
- To complete grant applications in liaison with the Treasurer.
- To liaise with adoption **ICSWA** social workers who are members of IASW.
- To periodically review the **ICSWA** website.
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Vice Chair-

- To deputise for the Chairperson when required and take on their role and responsibilities as above.
- To assist the Chairperson in his/her duties as required.

Secretary:

- To take and prepare draft minutes of all Executive and Council meetings.
- To consult with the Chairperson and agree the agenda and notification of all meetings including AGM and EGM's.
- To assist the Chairperson with compiling a written report of the activities of **ICSWA** since the previous AGM.
- To maintain and keep a list of all members of **ICSWA**.
- To keep a list of Executive members with their contact details.
- To liaise with TUSLA re adoption social work staff changes and advise of membership of **ICSWA**.
- To send out correspondence on the recommendation of the Executive on behalf of **IASWA**.
- To collect and circulate any relevant information within **IASWA**.
- To access email correspondence and make the Chairperson aware of correspondence on **ICSWA**'s website or delegate this to another member of the Executive.

Treasurer

- To supervise the financial affairs of **IASWA**.
- To keep proper accounts that show all monies collected and paid out by **ICSWA**.
- To present a financial report at Executive meetings.
- To present full accounts at **ICSWA**'s Annual General Meeting
- To provide annual accounts to **ICSWA**'s accountant for signing off before the end of January for the previous year.
- To obtain any necessary quotations or details of costs for anticipated expenditure.
- To liaise with the Chairperson regarding the completion of grant applications.
- To assist with negotiations for ongoing funding and grant applications and attend meetings where required.
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8. Finance

Accounts must be signed off by **ICSWA**'s accountant each year. The funds of the **ICSWA** can only be used to further the aims of **ICSWA** and for no other purposes.

The Chairperson/Acting Chair and the Treasurer are authorised to sign cheques on behalf of **ICSWA**.

A fee structure shall be in place for members and non-members.

Executive members can claim travel expenses for attendance at meetings. Train fares are generally paid in preference for mileage except in exceptional circumstances.

9. Rules & Procedures

Any proposal in relation to the organisation may be raised by any member at the Annual General Meeting provided one week's written notice of intention to raise such a matter has been received by the Chairperson or Secretary.

The Chairperson/Acting Chair, in consultation with the Secretary, can summon an Executive, General, or Extraordinary General Meeting at any time.

Should the Chairperson not being able to attend a Committee meeting this should be chaired by the Vice-Chair. Should both be unable to attend, a Chairperson shall be appointed by consensus or a majority vote from those present to act for the Chairperson at that meeting. The same applies should the Secretary be unable to attend a meeting.

A vote at all meetings shall be carried by a simple majority of those voting. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson/Acting Chair shall have the casting vote.

The Chairperson or Secretary shall give up to **21** days notice of any proposed amendments to the Constitution to be made at an EGM.

The Chairperson or Secretary shall give up to **7** days notice of an Executive meeting and shall send a copy of the minutes of the previous meeting and agenda to each member.

The Executive Committee has the authority on behalf of its members to make decisions and take such action as will be in accordance with the policies of **ICSWA**.

The Executive Committee shall have power to appoint Sub-Committees to consider areas of special interest on its behalf where there is a need to work within a more defined area of practice. A member of the Sub Committee shall be appointed to report back to each Executive meeting as to their progress.

The Chair, in consultation with the Secretary, shall be required to furnish to the members of the Council at the Annual General Meeting each year, a report of the activities of **ICSWA** over the preceding year and the Treasurer shall furnish an Income and Expenditure Account.

10. Conflict and Dispute Resolution

ICSWA is committed to the prompt and fair resolution of all disputes and differences which may arise during the conducting of its business. Should a conflict arise that cannot be resolved at an Executive meeting the matter will be brought to the next Council meeting or if more expedient the Chairperson in consultation with the Secretary can convene an Extraordinary General Meeting. If necessary a nominated person can be appointed by Council to attend the Executive and act as a mediator.

11. Amendments

The Constitution may be altered or amended only with the consent of the majority at an Extraordinary General Meeting. Members will be notified in advance of any proposed changes.

12. Dissolution

ICSWA may be wound up at any time if agreed by two thirds of the members who are present and voting at any Annual General Meeting. In the event of winding up, any assets remaining, after all debts have been paid, shall be given to another organisation with similar aims and objectives.

13.Data Protection & Freedom of Information

Any personal data held by **ICSWA** will be processed in compliance with all relevant Data Protection Legislation. This shall be in accordance with **ICSWA**'s privacy policy which sets out how personal data is used as well as information regarding the rights of a data subject.

Last reviewed May 2024