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BASW is the Professional Association for Social Workers in the United Kingdom. We seek to promote best practice in social work and to secure the well-being of social workers.

BASW is frequently asked to explain the position of the social work profession on current issues. These position statements seek to explain positions that we express on issues that arise frequently. They comprise statements in **bold** and commentary in *italics*. The commentary seeks to reflect our Code of Ethics, the views of our members expressed through our democratic structures, and our understanding of social work internationally as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline.

This position statement about the naming of social workers is about naming and criticising of social workers in the press, online, in reported cases and by members of the public. This is sometimes called 'naming and shaming'.

1. Everyone has a right to freedom of opinion and expression, but social workers have a right to the protection of the law against interference with their privacy and family and home life.

Commentary: Human rights are central to social work (IFSW Definition of Social Work). Specifically, we uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and associated UN declarations (BASW Code of Ethics at 2.1). These rights include the right to freedom of opinion and expression (Article 19) and protection of the law from attacks on honour and reputation (Article 12). We recognise that sometimes there is a tension between one person's human rights and another's, in which case we seek to give effect, as far as possible, to both rights (BASW Human Rights Policy p20). We therefore acknowledge and uphold the right of others to criticise us, but expect them to do so in a way that respects our own rights as human beings.

2. Social workers should be transparent, professional and accountable.

Commentary: Being transparent includes both that service users should know what decisions have been taken that affect them and why, and also who was responsible for those decisions. (Code of Ethics at 2.3). Being professional means that social workers' practice should meet the standards against which they are regulated. BASW supports

regulatory standards for social work (BASW/IFSW Policy on Effective and Ethical Working Environments for Social Work p11). In the UK, these standards are set by regulatory Councils in each of the four nations. Being accountable means both that social workers' decisions should be subject to challenge through legal processes, and that social worker's competence and conduct should be subject to review through regulatory processes. Social workers have a duty to help service users to exercise these rights (Code of Ethics, Principle 4, p13).

3. Public criticism of social workers must be lawful. It should not be untrue or defamatory. It should not amount to either civil or criminal harassment. It should be confined to criticism of professional practice and should not interfere with the private lives of social workers nor enable others to do so.

Commentary: The commentary above explains that there are legal frameworks within which the decisions, competence and conduct of social workers can lawfully be criticised. Those legal frameworks allow individual social workers to be named, although in appropriate cases they allow social workers' identities to be protected. Attempts to subvert those processes are unlawful. Where criticism is criminal, BASW supports the prosecution of offenders. BASW is opposed to so-called 'hate sites' and calls for their removal. BASW opposes the 'doorstepping' of social workers or other journalistic or online practices that move outside professional criticism or allow others to do so. 'No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.' (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 12)

4. Where social workers are employed, employers have particular responsibilities to protect them from the harmful consequences of unfair criticism. This should include employers bringing legal proceedings against perpetrators, to give effect to employers' duty of care to social workers.

Commentary: BASW endorses the IFSW Europe Charter of Rights for Social Workers which summarises the support that social workers require to practise safely and secure the best possible outcomes for those using their services. It has developed the BASW/IFSW Policy on Effective and Ethical Working Environments for Social Work: The responsibilities of employers of social workers. The Charter expresses the right to work in a safe environment free from abuse. The Policy at 4.2.1 sets out the responsibilities of employers to secure this. It explicitly recognises evidence that confirms that social workers frequently experience trauma and violence in the course of their professional practice, and requires employers to provide necessary protection.