

## HOW TO WRITE AND SUBMIT MOTIONS TO BASW'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) provides BASW members<sup>1</sup> with an opportunity to influence the future of BASW and social work by submitting motions. Members are encouraged to engage with the AGM and propose motions that can help develop BASW's policies and activities and those of the profession.

The AGM happens once a year and therefore it is not the main or only forum in which issues of member concern or interest can be raised. There are many routes both formal and informal that can be used to bring issues to Council and the wider membership's attention and gain BASW support or endorsement for a course of action.

Options to raise issues within BASW are outlined below but do contact us if you are uncertain which channel to use and whether a motion is the best way forward. To raise this or any other query about bringing motions and to feedback on this guidance, email [governance@basw.co.uk](mailto:governance@basw.co.uk)

#### **What is a Motion?**

A motion is a proposal from members that BASW endorses and/or takes action on an issue. This proposal is put to the membership as a whole at an AGM. The members attending the AGM debate and vote upon the contents of that motion.

Members who cannot attend the AGM can vote in advance by sending their voting intention to someone who votes in the meeting on their behalf (acts as their 'proxy'). The views of members who do not attend nor send a proxy vote cannot be taken into consideration in the AGM.

#### **What's the difference between a motion, an ordinary resolution, and a special resolution?**

##### **Motions:**

Motions are designed to make it simple to bring forward matters of policy or issues of concern to the AGM which members would like debated by the wider membership. Motions are advisory to Council but are taken very seriously as expressions of member views and wishes. Member motions will be acted on wherever possible. However, they are not legally binding and do not fetter the legal duties of Council (the Directors of BASW) to take decisions and manage resources which on occasions may mean motions are not (or are partially) enacted. BASW Council always feeds back to the membership at the next AGM what they have or have not taken forward and the reasons.

Motions are passed by a simple majority of over 50% of those voting in the AGM.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Member' and 'Members' throughout relates to full voting members of BASW i.e. those who in paid membership at the time of the AGM.

## Special or ordinary resolutions

Resolutions are reserved for formal Companies Act business, such as constitutional or name changes. Special resolutions are passed by a majority of not less than 75% of the voting members in the AGM in accordance with the Companies Acts and are generally proposed by Council as Directors of BASW. Ordinary resolutions are for other business under Company Law which is less significant in nature and can be passed by a simple majority of more than 50%.

## Who can submit motions to the AGM?

A motion can be put forward by any of the following:

- A member proposer and member seconder plus 18 full voting BASW members who have signed in support of the motion
- One of BASW's Standing Committees or National Standing Committees (as agreed by the Chair)
- The Social Workers Union
- A properly constituted Branch<sup>2</sup>
- A properly constituted Special Interest Group<sup>3</sup>

If you want to raise a motion through a relevant Committee, Branch or Special Interest Group, please contact the Chair in advance and agree a reasonable timeframe for submitting your proposed motion to them. This will allow the Committee, Branch or Special Interest Group to be able to fully consider the motion, which will improve the possibility of receiving their support before the submission deadline.

## How do I bring a motion?

You should write your motion in accordance with the guidance below on how motions should be worded. Your motion should be no more than 150 words.

If you wish to raise a motion through the Committee, Branch, Special Interest Group structure and don't know who to contact, please use the contact details below

- Policy, Ethics & Human Rights Committee; International Committee; Special Interest Groups – [policyadmin@basw.co.uk](mailto:policyadmin@basw.co.uk)
- Branches – [england@basw.co.uk](mailto:england@basw.co.uk)
- Nations –
  - England - [england@basw.co.uk](mailto:england@basw.co.uk)
  - Wales – [wales@basw.co.uk](mailto:wales@basw.co.uk)
  - Scotland – [scotland@basw.co.uk](mailto:scotland@basw.co.uk)
  - Northern Ireland – [n.ireland@basw.co.uk](mailto:n.ireland@basw.co.uk)

## Will my motion or amendment be accepted automatically?

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<sup>2</sup> A Branch that is ratified by Council

<sup>3</sup> A Special Interest Group that is ratified by Policy, Ethics and Human Rights Committee

All proposals for motions or amendments will first be considered by a Standing Orders Committee made up of Council members from across the four nations.

The Standing Orders Committee will consider a range of matters including whether the proposed motion would be more appropriately remitted to a Committee, Branch, group or to Council rather than as a motion to the AGM. This is to ensure that members' concerns are addressed effectively and promptly by the most appropriate body of BASW. The Standing Orders Committee can decide that a motion will not go forward on the basis it can be dealt with by another body in BASW.

The Standing Orders Committee will work with proposers to help clarify anything in a motion that is unclear or ambiguous. In most circumstances, the Standing Orders Committee will work with you to produce a motion that is clear and concise, and ready for consideration by the wider membership.

The Committee may produce composite motions – this means bringing together two or more motions relating to the same area.

The Committee aims to help proposers bring clearly articulated motions that can be understood in the limited time available in an AGM and that there is a clear matter to vote upon. Those members bringing motions to the AGM will be given a defined timeslot (either live or recorded in advance) to propose and second their motion.

## **Rejecting motions**

The Standing Orders Committee aims to help motions come forward to the AGM. But some motions may be rejected for a number of reasons. These include

- the same issue has been debated and/or voted on at a previous recent AGM;
- the issue is not sufficiently connected with BASW's remit, ethics or purpose;
- it is a matter that can be answered or progressed better through another route (e.g. asking an easily answered factual question);
- it does not have a UK-wide focus or relevance.

Motions can also be rejected if they include inaccurate information or quotes, make personal attacks, or they state a particular viewpoint without clearly identifying actions that BASW would be able to take, are unclear or attempt to deal with complex issues in ways that cannot meaningfully be considered at an AGM.

This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other reasons why a motion cannot be put to the AGM. All decisions of the Standing Orders Committee to reject a motion will be put to full Council for final agreement.

If you are not happy with the decision of the Standing Orders Committee and want the decision to be reconsidered, Council may agree to review this if the proposer can present grounds for reconsideration, (e.g. making the case that a motion is materially different to a previous motion brought to a previous recent AGM). It should be noted that Council's decision on which motions to put on the AGM agenda and the wording of any motion is final.

In all cases, the decision would be explained to the proposer.

This guidance should not deter members from motions being submitted as they are essential in shaping BASW's strategic direction through policy development.

### **If the motion is passed at the AGM, what happens next?**

Although motions, which have been passed, are not legally binding, Council will take very seriously any motion passed at the AGM and will report back to the membership at the AGM the following year how it has met the terms of the motion or explain any reasons why a motion has not been progressed.

### **Are there other ways of raising an issue of concern?**

There are many ways to raise issues of concern within BASW. You can contact Council and relevant staff at BASW via [governance@basw.co.uk](mailto:governance@basw.co.uk). Your issue can be raised in confidence, and we will signpost you to the best route to bring any appropriate concerns to the wider membership.

You can approach relevant BASW Special Interest Groups, topic groups and committees if the issue pertains to one of their thematic areas, and you can communicate through the wider network of branches/Special Interest Groups.

This can be achieved by using the following contact details:

- Policy, Ethics & Human Rights Committee & International Committee & Special Interest Groups – [policyadmin@basw.co.uk](mailto:policyadmin@basw.co.uk)
- Branches – [england@basw.co.uk](mailto:england@basw.co.uk)
- Thematic Groups - [england@basw.co.uk](mailto:england@basw.co.uk)
- Nations –
  - England - [england@basw.co.uk](mailto:england@basw.co.uk)
  - Wales – [wales@basw.co.uk](mailto:wales@basw.co.uk)
  - Scotland – [scotland@basw.co.uk](mailto:scotland@basw.co.uk)
  - Northern Ireland – [n.ireland@basw.co.uk](mailto:n.ireland@basw.co.uk)

### **Writing a motion**

Motions should be clear, succinct and have a well-defined action that BASW is capable of undertaking. Motions that are likely to be passed or will encourage an important debate are more likely to be supported by the Standing Orders Committee and included in the agenda.

### **What Does a Good Motion Look Like?**

All motions being submitted for consideration at the AGM should begin as follows:

*“That this AGM....”*

Then you need a verb. What is the AGM being asked to do, some suggestions include:

*notes; asks; calls for; regards; endorses; recognises*

The motion will often then go on to describe what action the proposers of the motion want from BASW, for example:

*“Accordingly, this AGM agrees that BASW will...”*

## **Topics**

Choose new and/or topical motions that either advance and substantiate BASW’s work or stance to date or stimulate members to consider new and important issues. The AGM needs motivating and topical debates. Even if your motion fails it can still offer the AGM a valuable perspective.

Try to ensure your ask is feasible and tangible,

Ensure the topic and action are related to BASW’s mission to act *for Social Workers, for Social Work, for a Better Society*.

## **Common Problems With Motions:**

### **Not all parts of the motion make sense**

Make sure that each individual clause in your motion makes sense and all clauses together add up to an unambiguous and logical proposal.

### **Lack of clarity**

The motion needs to be clear about what it is referring to, what it is calling to be done, and by whom. It needs to be clear and easily understandable by members in a busy AGM.

The Standing Orders Committee will occasionally make amendments to motions to make them clearer, but if after contacting the proposer they still do not know what the motion is trying to say, or believe it contains contradictions or complexities that cannot be dealt with in an AGM, they may have to reject it.

### **Asking for things which are not possible**

If your motion asks for action, make sure BASW (or other named bodies or individuals) are in a position to take that action. For example, you cannot ask that BASW introduces a specific regulation governing the work of social workers, because BASW is not a regulatory body. You could ask BASW to lobby the government to introduce a specific regulation governing the work of social workers. BASW is able to lobby other bodies, so this would be realistic.

### **Not being succinct**

The motion should focus on a small number of specific key asks or points. This will enable members to take a meaningful vote. When you speak to the motion you can expand and explain why you have asked for something. But the written motion must contain the key points as additional or changed points cannot usually be raised during the AGM.

### **Do not include your speech in the motion**

You will need to propose your motion to the AGM in a short speech (i.e. reasons the motion should pass, or background to the motion). This is your chance to expand upon the motion and explain to other members why they should vote for it.

### **Avoid the use of ‘factoids’**

A ‘factoid’ is an item of unreliable information that is reported and repeated so often that it is assumed to be factual. Motions that contain such anecdotal facts cannot be validated, and they will most likely be rejected by the Standing Orders Committee.

### **Avoid any libellous, defamatory, discriminatory, or offensive statements**

These will lead to the motion being rejected and will contravene BASW’s Code of Ethics.

### **Key Tips for Speaking on Your Motion:**

The Proposer and Seconder will be asked to speak to their motion for a limited time (typically around 3 minutes).

- Keep your speech concise and to the point of your motion, giving background and additional details only where they support the motion.
- Try to plan your speech with an introduction, a section on each point of the motion or part, and the conclusion.
- Remember that a live speech is likely to take longer on the day than when you practice it. Check the AGM agenda for timings, and plan and practice accordingly.
- Try to speak from bullet pointed notes if you can – you will get lost in reading out paragraphs and it will not sound as genuine.

Experienced members can help you form your ideas, suggest which bits of background are worth explaining, or help you choose the right words to say what you want to. Ask for help at any stage from the initial idea to a fully drafted motion, email [governance@basw.co.uk](mailto:governance@basw.co.uk)

### **Examples of a well worded motion:**

Example One:

***An example of a motion that builds on BASW’s ethics, practice, and policy work to date on core social work concerns and asks for more emphasis on these key issues in future actions.***

This AGM welcomes BASW'S response to the recent shocking and horrific Panorama expose of violent and abusive practices carried out by staff upon adults with learning difficulties and autistic adults at Whorlton Hall. It believes that ongoing abusive care is still being delivered to people with learning disability and/or autism in a range of institutional settings.

The AGM fully endorses the Association's view that relationship-based and rights-based social work practice is fundamental in preventing harm and crisis situations through person centred, inter-agency and community-based provision.

The AGM calls on BASW to

- advocate for political, policy and practice reforms in this area and to make further representation to Government to urgently end institutionalised placements across the UK, through the development of replacement social care models of service delivery with social workers integral to their provision.
- build on current work across the UK to ensure and promote clear practice for social workers working with people who remain in these placements.

Example two:

***This motion introduces a new perspective on equality, diversity and inclusion of relevance and importance to social work practice and relationships with people using services, and asks for specific actions. It is a new topic, but the motion introduces it clearly and gives members a fair opportunity to take a view and vote on proposed actions. However, Council would have the right to decide what level of resources could be put into achieving the specific asks of the Motion.***

This AGM notes that:

There are myriad ways in which class and classism can play out in social work at practice and policy levels, including through social determinants such as politically-mandated poverty and austerity, the impact on people's ability to effectively challenge professional authorities and unequal distribution of local authority resources, Within intersectional approaches, class is often not emphasised, yet lower social economic class is a common characteristic among people who draw the attention of social workers.

Therefore, this AGM calls on BASW to develop a distinct strand within its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work that promotes class conscious social work practice by

- Commissioning/collaborating on research on the impact of class and classism at the interface of social work and lived experience
- Developing a suite of class-conscious resources to mitigate the impact of classism in social work practice and policy
- Promoting awareness of and discussion of class and classism in social work