



The Social Work Awards – a statement of our ethics

Board Paper – June 2019

Decisions taken by the Board

1. The ethical principles were presented for discussion and approved at a Board meeting on 25 June 2019
2. The ethical principles sit alongside a new process for sponsorship
3. The Board has also refreshed its safeguarding and feedback, complaints and whistleblowing policies
4. The Board has agreed to publish these widely and welcomes further comments, which it will review at its meeting in January 2020
5. The Board will use this framework in all it does and regularly take time to consider the way its work is shaped by its values
6. The policy will be formally reviewed by the Board in three years (June 2022)

Introduction

The Board of The Social Work Awards charity has taken a deliberative approach to the development of a set of ethical principles to guide our work. This has included:

- An openness in our social media and communications to invite discussion and comments to the development of this approach
- A workshop of the Board, where we were joined by three independent people from BASW and Social Workers Without Borders. These participants brought an outside perspective and added value to our deliberations.
- A literature review and consideration of best practice models
- A formal presentation of this approach back to Board for discussion and approval

National/recommended frameworks

The Charity Commission's work highlights the importance of trustworthiness: the public want charities to be good stewards of fund, to live their values and to demonstrate impact.

NCVO set out a clear position for how charities should use the ethical principles to underpin how they go about their work. They state:



“All charities should proactively champion ethical behaviour and reflect and apply their charitable values in any activity they undertake, in addition to meeting their legal and regulatory requirements.

Governing bodies, staff and volunteers should actively consider the principles and how they can be integrated in all their work and decision-making. Individuals at every level of the organisation should be held accountable for modelling the behaviours set out by the principles.

When following the principles and in all their work charities should:

- Respect every individual’s dignity and rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- Commit to challenging any instances of sexism, gender inequality and other power imbalances that leave some people at risk of harm.”

NCVO Charity Ethical Principles, January 2019

The board have reflected upon these principles and decided that they form the basis for the approach adopted by The Social Work Awards.

NCVO set out four principles as the basis of their ethical framework for charities.

Principle	Description
Beneficiaries first	The interests of their beneficiaries and the causes they work for should be at the heart of everything charities and those who work and volunteer in and with them do.
Integrity	Charities and those who work and volunteer in and with them should uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times.
Openness	Charities should create a culture and space where donors and supporters, as well as the wider public, can see and understand how they work, how they deal with problems when they arise and how they spend their funds.
Right to be safe	<p>Every person who volunteers with, works for or comes into contact with a charity should be treated with dignity and respect, and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment.</p> <p>All charities have a responsibility to create an inclusive culture that does not tolerate inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour towards any person who works for, volunteers with, or comes into contact with the charity.</p> <p>Charities should also be places where people’s wellbeing and mental health are valued and promoted, so that anyone</p>



	working in the charity or coming into contact with the charity is encouraged to value and invest in their own health and wellbeing.
--	---

We propose to adopt these four values and descriptions as a model of best practice. We do however reject the use of the term ‘beneficiaries’ which we believe inappropriate:

- Social work is about a mutual respect for the potential of all, recognised in the increasing development of people leading their own support and having more control over their lives.
- The purpose of the awards is to enhance the standing of social work which we believe rests on mutual respect for the contribution that everyone can make to outstanding social work practice

Our framework of ethical principles for The Social Work Awards charity:

Values	We show this value in our principles:	We will apply this value by:
Our cause	We stand for the promotion of social work through celebration and recognition and place this at the heart of everything we do. Great social work changes the lives of those involved and promotes the need for social change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We hold the Global Definition of Social Work as core to our work • Our Trustees have a broader responsibility to social work which they bring into their responsibility as a Board member • We actively review experience of the awards. We are committed to always listening to the views of people with experience of social work and take these into account in our decision making. • We review of our impact and constantly seek to improve this • We recognise that not everyone will celebrate social work in the same way. We offer the choice of not attending the event to finalists. • We work to make sure that we are promoting the need to build a culture of recognition across all social work settings
Integrity	We will uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times, consistent with our position as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our golden rule is to do nothing which would tarnish the celebration of social work, which is our cause. • We assure ourselves that decisions are robust, free from conflict of interest and defensible. Where others think we have



	<p>representing the best of social work. The charity will be a champion to bring integrity to the championing of our cause.</p>	<p>failed to meet this standard, we listen and review our position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are good stewards of the resources we have and look after the present and future development of a financially sound charity • We have no tolerance of bribery, fraud and corruption • We have appointed our Founding Trustee to a specific independent role to guard our values through her own diligence and to be a contact point for concerns • We work in partnership with public sector bodies who wish to support our work, unless we are clear that doing so poses a significant risk to the ethical values of the charity • Where commercial organisations wish to support our work, we seek assurance that their support and collaboration is consistent with our ethical values • We review sponsorship against the five-step model and invite information into that process from across the sector • As social work is funded for social good, we do not accept money from companies not registered for tax in the UK • We appoint Trustees to the Board with care and due diligence. We want to become a board which represents the diversity of social work and thinking • We work with people with high public profile to promote our cause. The Board always reviews any proposal before we make any connection and association • We do not allow our association through sponsorship or public profile to detract from our cause
<p>Openness</p>	<p>We will model easy ways to see how we work and how we spend our money. We will be transparent in how we deal with problems that may arise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continue to set out how we work as clearly as we can through our website • We seek to continually strengthen the voice of people with lived experience of social work in all aspects of the charity's work • We publish an annual report and include in it a review of how we are meeting our purpose • We publish our safeguarding, complaints and whistleblowing policies



		<p>and annually include data upon their use in the annual report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We see our accountability in terms of the profession and always take seriously matters raised with us by others who represent our profession in politics, membership organisations and public life • We spend our money wisely. We regularly review our venue choice(s) against criteria for celebration, economic value/contribution and sustainability
The right to be safe	We will always create an inclusive culture that does not tolerate inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour towards any person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We exist to build a celebration of social work and we want everyone to be able to share in the spirit of celebration. We do this by promoting the accessibility and inclusivity of the awards and by the culture we create at our events. • We do not tolerate bullying, harassment, intimidation and discrimination in any of our activities • We promote a culture which supports the reporting and resolution of allegation or concerns about behaviours • We ensure that we promote these expectations very clearly in all we do • We expect to work with councils and others who may have been judged as 'unsafe' to contribute to their growing recognition of good social work

It is suggested we add further value:

Bravery	Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work and therefore its celebration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have awards which highlight all the aspects social work • We do not shy from controversy when celebrating excellence
---------	---	--



Conclusion

The Board has reached agreement about this statement of ethical principles based upon:

- Formally considering and reviewing best practice for charities
- Through an open workshop: we are very grateful for the contributions made by BASW and Social Workers Without Borders, although the responsibility for this policy rests with the Board
- Through further engagement – we will be transparent about communication of these decisions and welcome responses to these which we will review in January 2020
- Through continual review – we review key policies at regular intervals

Finally, ethics set the framework for how we work and behave: we will work hard as a Board to be effective in applying this framework in all we do, by being very open to feedback and being held to account where we fall short so that we do better.

References

BASW, The Code of Ethics for social work, October 2014

<https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/basw-code-ethics-social-work>

The Charity Commission, Trust in Charities, July 2018

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723566/Charity Commission - Trust in Charities 2018 - Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723566/Charity_Commission_-_Trust_in_Charities_2018_-_Report.pdf)

NCVO, Charity Ethical Principles, January 2019

https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/ethics/Charity-Ethical-Principles.pdf

Institute of Business Ethics – Ethics in the Charity Sector, Business Ethics Briefing June 2018

https://www.ibe.org.uk/userassets/briefings/ibe_briefing_63_ethics_in_the_charity_sector.pdf

The Institute of Fundraising, Acceptance, Refusal and Return: A Practical Guide to Dealing with Donations, May 2018

<https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/library/iof-acceptance-refusal-return-guidance/>

The Essential Trustee, Charity Commission - 6 main duties

