



SOCIAL WORK ACTION NETWORK INTERNATIONAL (SWAN-I) FOUNDING STATEMENT MAY 2020

The International Social Work Action Network (SWAN-I) is a network of radical social work organisations and supporters from across the globe. In some countries (UK, Ireland, Greece, Denmark, for example) our groups are called the Social Work Action Network, but in other locations local groups have their own distinctive names and histories (in the Boston area our colleagues are organised in the Boston Liberatory Health Network)

What unites SWAN-I groups is our commitment to political action and campaign work to improve social work practice for the benefit all those involved in, participating in, receiving or providing social work services. Local groups are best placed to know and understand their own immediate political environment, SWAN-I does not impose activities on local groups, but we come together around shared principles, around particular campaign activities and in our support of each other to develop and strengthen traditions of radical social work in our countries.

Affiliates of SWAN-I groups formally agree to the following:

- A. We are committed to putting people and human need, before profit.*
- B. We are for fully funded social work, health and welfare services, free at the point of use and delivery. We recognise that there are different models of welfare across the globe, but our priority is that social work services, health and welfare should be available to all, free and of the highest quality.*
- C. We are against privatised forms of service delivery because they reinforce inequalities and oppression and because public services should never be shaped by the requirements and demands of producing private profit. This does not mean we are uncritical of state provision of services and we recognise that the state is primarily concerned with protecting the interests of capital and national elites.*
- D. We are against any form of stigma or selectivism in welfare delivery. Social work, health and welfare services are a right, not a privilege.*
- E. We are absolutely committed to the principle that people receiving and engaging with services should be involved in all decisions about their lives. In the words of the Disability Rights Movement “nothing about us, without us”. We believe all people engaged with services and social workers have common interests in the provision of better funded and better quality social work, health and welfare services.*
- F. We are against inequality and oppression - in all its forms.*
- G. As a social work network we recognise that there are many ways of performing the social work task - from working with individuals, to community based work to campaign and political models of intervention. There is no single ‘radical social work model’. But we also recognise that, whilst social problems may be experienced individually, the root of contemporary social problems are in the nature and organisation of contemporary neo-liberal capitalism. In other words, most private troubles have public and social causes. As such, ultimately, they need collective, political solutions to address the social cause: social work must be an unashamedly political project.*