

## **APCSW STRUCTURE**

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

The survey was initiated by the Executive Committee to elicit the views of members on the structure of the APCSW, particularly whether members would prefer a structure with more emphasis on the four nations (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, England). The Executive Committee also asked for suggestions as to any changes which would make the organisation as a whole more representative, relevant and effective.

The survey was carried out in August 2018 through Survey Monkey. The membership of the APCSW at that time was 238; comprising 205 full members, 16 associate members (people with a professional interest in palliative care, but not palliative care social workers) and 17 friends (retired palliative care social workers). The Association is run by members who volunteer their time to take on a role: as Representative for their local region, or as Chair, Vice Chair, Education Lead, Membership Secretary or Treasurer for the Association. Together these positions form the Executive Committee.

- 68 members, 29% of the membership, responded to the survey.
- Questions were asked about the structure of the APCSW; where budget responsibility should sit; members' ability / willingness to be involved in running the organisation; ways in which the APCSW could be more helpful / relevant to members.
- As well as quantitative data, respondents contributed many comments about what works and what is challenging with respect to the structure and working of the organisation.
- There was no mandate for significant structural change, nor offers to be more involved in running the organisation, but lots of constructive comments were made.
- The Executive Committee is to take forward the results of the survey in the 3 Year Plan.

If you wish to see a more detailed breakdown of the results, please read on.

## CONTEXT

The spread of our membership across nations is (in descending order of size):

<b>Nation</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>	<b>% of Membership</b>
England	210	88%
Scotland	17	7%
Wales	9	4%
International	2	1%
Northern Ireland	0	0%

We have 6 regions, where members have organised themselves, elected a representative (or two) and hold meetings for peer support and put on training events. Each region has a budget (£500). Our regions, and their membership, are (in descending order of size):

<b>Region</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>	<b>% of Membership</b>
London & South East England	77	32%
Northern England	63	26%
South West England	37	16%
Midlands	31	13%
Scotland	17	7%
Eastern	11	5%
International	02	1%

Members in North Wales belong to the Northern England region, and those in South Wales belong to the South West England region.

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

68 members, 29%, responded to the survey. This means 170, or 71% of the membership, did not participate. We can only speculate as to why so many people did not take part; but we need to be cautious not to consider majority views expressed as being representative of the whole membership.

### Responses from nations

Proportions of survey responses in terms of which nation members work in are similar to membership across the nations. Most members work in England and most of our responses were from members in England; followed by Scotland, then Wales. We currently have no members in Northern Ireland.

### Responses from regions

Similarly London and South East England has the highest level of membership (32%) and the highest response rate (37%), followed by the Northern region with 27% of our membership and contributing 24% of the response. The Eastern region constitutes the lowest level of both membership (5% of the total) and of responses (4%).

### Responses by type of membership

Roughly the same proportion of each membership category responded e.g. 86% of our members are full members, and 87% of the 68 who responded are full members.

### Responses to survey questions

#### 1. Which option for the structure of the APCSW would you prefer?

Structure option	No. of Responses	% of Responses	% of Membership
Current (regions only)	28	41%	12%
4 nations with regions within the nations	27	40%	11%
4 nations with no regions	11	16%	5%
Other	2	3%	1%

The two "other" suggestions made by respondents were:

- (i) "Self selected regions"
- (ii) "The 4 nation structure ... whether there are regions would be up to each nation."

Themed summary of reasons given in support of the structure with the most votes:

### **“Current – regions only”**

One voice:

- 4 nations would lead to greater segregation not integration.
- A more representative basis and access to other National bodies.
- While some laws and systems differ in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, it is possible to adapt APCSW material to reflect this where necessary, better to have one body to speak for and advocate across all countries. Easier for different regions to learn from each other and share ideas, challenges etc.
- The fact that [the Association] can speak with a single voice into the corridors of power nationally, and bring that weight to bear on local or regional issues as well is a huge strength. We've been able to use this united national voice to impact palliative care and the equality we now have with health colleagues is in part down to being represented. Splitting is a huge mistake, diluting the message, confusing our aims. There will be enormous areas of overlap and actions from one nation's agenda could easily undermine another's.
- The key principles of palliative care social work are the same wherever you live / work & many members say what they value most about the Association is sharing knowledge / skills and networking with other palliative care Social Workers.

Viability:

- The Association is too small, a 4 nations structure would result in a dilution and eventual demise of the Association.
- It is difficult to get members to take on roles, so it would be a challenge to have good representation from each nation.

Addressing regional issues:

- Distance and time needed to travel to meetings.
- Regional groups understand each other better. Can share national issues at conference.

No reason to change:

- The current structure works, enables APCSW to meet its objectives.
- No reason to tamper with things merely for the sake of it, if there was a clamour for change I would support it but I see no reason for change at this stage. Excessive bureaucracy is counterproductive.

Themed summary of reasons given in support of with the second most votes:

### **“4 nations with regions within the nations”**

Difference in legislation:

- Due to the difference in legislation in the nations, it would be helpful to try the 4 nations with regions included but to still all draw on experience across the board.
- To change the current structure is complex and I would want to know what this would actually mean - i.e. if the decision was to change to 4 nations would there be separate chairs/committees? Wales, NI and Scotland are small groups - is there a danger that if we split into nations these countries will lose momentum and the voice/support of the association may not be so helpful. These countries may not be

able to operate as nations with regions within them due to their capacity. The current structure works to some extent however the fact that the association consists of 4 nations has been overlooked in conference planning (where presentation tend to be more English focused) and more emphasis needs to be given to addressing multiple needs (I feel this has started to happen more recently). Calling Scotland, NI and Wales groups or nations instead of regions is essential - and ensuring that these groups are always represented in conference planning.

- Legislation and policy differs between the countries.
- I find the existing regional structure relevant and supportive and would be very sad to lose this. I can see the logic of a 4-nations structure following devolution within the UK leading to distinctions in social care, health & palliative care provision within the nations of the UK - as long as this is not at the cost of a regional structure.
- Regional meetings are difficult to get to at times due to distances involved, some of us have formed sub meetings within regions.
- Acknowledges differences between the countries. Maintains opportunity to facilitate joint activity between people who are within travelling distance.

#### Benefit of regions:

- I like the idea of a 4 nations structure, but ultimately think this should be down to those members in Wales and N. Ireland. I do think that the regional structure within England is working pretty well - there has been discussion before about splitting the North (a huge area) into North-west and North-east, but the bulk of most active members are in the Yorkshire area. Combining the London and SW and London and SE regions appears to have worked well, though they may have other thoughts.... it is also a huge area now.
- It would help to understand countries' policies /procedures as well as having a regional understanding of local issues.
- Due to the large size of the region, we are never able to attend meetings. In our region, we set up our own quarterly meetings to ensure some peer support etc.
- The regional meetings are really important and a good way to feedback what is happening from the committee or nationally.

#### Too England-centric:

- The current structure is too England-focused, with little involvement from the other nations. The structure needs to be strengthened so members in the other nations get a better service and feel more supported and involved. Each nation is geographically large, and involvement and attendance at meetings is more likely to happen if there are regions within each country. There can be clarification as to what happens at national level and what happens at regional level; as well as what happens at the overall level, to avoid splintering.

#### Difficulty achieving a national structure:

- Ideally the structure would be national but there has never been enough interest in Wales for this, hence South Wales being in the south west group. There are differences in Wales in terms of registration and the law so being part of an English group does impact as lots of things are not common.

**2. If the structure were based around the 4 nations with regions within them, whom would you want to hold the budget? (Tick one)**

<b>Preferred budget-holder</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>	<b>% of Membership</b>
Shared (Nations and Regions)	21	32%	9%
Nations	17	26%	7%
Regions	16	25%	7%
Don't Know	11	17%	5%

Two people skipped the question and one person ticked two options, so was not counted.

Themed summary of reasons given in support of the budget structure with the most votes:

**“Shared (Nations and regions)”**

- Equitable.
- Transparency.
- To encourage joint working.
- Choice as to how to use the budget.
- Regions should always hold the budget - given that Scotland is currently 'a region', and Wales and NI would also be presumably.
- Each nation should have a proportion of the budget depending on the number of members that are in the nation. The Executive body should have representatives able to make the budget decisions, in conjunction with the nations. The executive should be representatives from each Nation, democratically elected.
- Offers most flexible option so that anyone who has a good idea can access it.
- Accountability and transparency are important and some equality about use of monies would be important.
- More balanced oversight of the needs of all.
- Overall control whilst allowing for smaller amounts to be delegated to allow flexibility for areas

Themed summary of reasons given in support of the budget structure with the second most votes:

**“Nations”**

- Equity
- One budget, one access point, one audit trail.
- More volunteers.
- A broad view.
- Easier to co-ordinate.
- The overall regional budget is only about £3,000, and some regions don't use it at all. If this amount is split 4-ways each nation only has £750. It can be managed to ensure equity across regions; too small an amount to have numerous budget-holders who may not use it.

Themed summary of reasons given in support of the budget structure with the third most votes:

### **“Regions”**

- More localised distribution of resources
- 'England' is too big an entity to give a sense of devolution.
- To give more autonomy to spend money on local issues.
- Able to use budget to meet local needs.

**3. The majority of the Executive Committee comprises Regional Representatives (up to a maximum of 2 per region). If the Association's structure were to change from the current regional-based one, what do you think would be a fair way of representing APCSW members on the Executive Committee?**

**Themed summary of comments:**

Status quo:

- Don't change the current structure as we need to ensure communication from the committee is fed back to regions so that we can feel somehow connected. Without that it will not feel that we are having any part in or out where decisions are concerned.
- Regional representation is vital to the on-going communication of the APCSW.

Relationship between national and regional reps:

- National representatives supported by close links with regional reps.
- Representation (of at least one person) from each nation and/or each region.
- Local regions could liaise with a National Rep.
- One member, one region, or two members per country.

New ideas:

- Have members sign up to a rolling rota to attend and feedback.
- If not enough volunteers from regions, perhaps just invite interested members, up to a certain number.
- Nominated access to Executive Committee. With members of the Committee having specific functions and roles which members could feed into.
- Voting by members to elect the Executive committee.
- If we were to go to a Nation/Regional structure (Scotland, Wales and NI, and then regional groups in England) the reps for those areas would be the best representation on the Exec.
- At least one member from each Nation.
- Up to three representatives from each nation. Regional representatives would report to the national reps but not be on the Executive.
- To reflect numbers of members in region/nation.
- National representatives via elections.
- National representatives on the exec committee representing the regions.
- If the majority of the exec are made up of the regions then theirs is the strongest voice. If Scotland wants to have better representation at the national exec, that's a different conversation. IF Scotland ever becomes independent, this is a question about whether the association structure works for them.
- Nominations.

- To have 2 or more membership rep posts that can be voted on to the committee.
- There could be two places for people not reps.
- Could be a mix of regions or subject areas. I think areas of the country have particular issues and needs and therefore I would want to see this represented on the exec.
- 1 x national lead from each of the nations to attend the executive committee meetings. As it is already a struggle to get members to take on any additional duties, I think that it could be a challenge to fill any additional national & / or regional role.
- It needs to be people who have the time and energy, but also the desire to serve the Association, so maybe volunteers with the aim for them to be geographically spread?
- An APCSW for each nation i.e. APCSW (Ireland), independent of each other. I don't know how feasible this is.

#### 4. How involved would you be in the Association's activities if it had a 4 nations structure?

Answers broken down by country:

	England	Scotland	Wales	Totals	% of Responses	% of Membership
A little	38	3	1	<b>42</b>	64%	<b>18%</b>
Not at all	11	2	0	<b>13</b>	20%	<b>6%</b>
A lot	8	2	1	<b>11</b>	17%	<b>5%</b>

Two people skipped the question.

Answers broken down by region:

	London & South East	Northern	Midlands	South West	Scottish	Eastern	Totals
A little	20	10	4	4	3	1	<b>42</b>
Not at all	4	2	3	1	2	1	<b>13</b>
A lot	1	3	3	2	2	0	<b>11</b>

In terms of willingness or ability to be involved, the answers received from 29% of our membership show that the majority (42 people, 18% of total membership) are prepared to be involved "a little" and only 11 members (5% of total membership) "a lot". We need to take this into account.

We don't know the thoughts of those who didn't take part in the survey - and the fact more didn't take part is a concern - but as they didn't, I'd assume that largely their involvement in the running of the Association would be "not at all".

**5. Please suggest any ways in which the APCSW could be more helpful / relevant to you.**

**Themed summary of comments:**

Communication:

- Just keeping the website up to date and relevant.
- Monthly email update. Some form of conference even a smaller one six months after the main one.
- We used to get a bit of a summary of what the national exec were doing after the meeting and that was really helpful in keeping us up to date.
- Finding a good way of feeding back the priorities of the association for the year. Then having a pathway to get involved in those decisions be it through small working parties locally or surveys / forums.
- I'm a recent member and like the document defining our role. Would be keen to see this as backbone for regular webinars/ internet based events for discussion and development of best practice.
- Ensuring that the materials and supports reflects the needs of the different nations and regions.
- Having support at the local and national level. Regular communications.
- More communication and links. Subject or interest groups and communities to help people have useful and interesting conversations. It can be all done on email, Facebook groups or whats app groups. We could use technology more effectively to link in. I'd be happy to be involved more in the association but no opportunity has been offered to me to get more involved since I re-joined. Maybe if people were asked about being involved in a smaller way they would be willing. This then helps the sustainability of the exec as once a person is interested then they know the exec isn't as scary as it sounds and will offer to help more.

Member role:

- Would be good if all members were asked for choices on important issues.
- More member involvement.
- Involvement by the wider community of PCSW so that we are more cohesive as a community and supportive.

National issues:

- More representation from Scotland and recognition of the differences across Social Work north and south of the border. Scotland has a strong social work identity with a socialist political ethos.

Regional issues:

- I get emails informing of national events or of general queries around questions from members but no regional events or meetings.
- A regional rep for London South West.

Practice issues:

- Development and ethical dilemmas.
- More training about practice issues.
- Maintain focus on social work and also increase the focus on holistic nature of palliative care and in particular the public health model.

- It's helpful when the Association follows a particular issue (e.g. funeral poverty) and informs us, consults where possible, keeps us up-dated. The website is a key resource, needs to be kept up-to-date and easy to find information.
- Concentrate on the core palliative care social work issues that affect people wherever they work. The conference should concentrate on the issues that have relevance to all members & perhaps organise a separate study day for English members about the challenges of CHC funding.
- More practice and law disseminated. Also options to meet other groups if geography allows.
- A focus on the social justice angle is important - especially at the moment. We should look at increasing inclusiveness generally - as an organisation and in our services wherever we work.
- Specific training events e.g. working with carers, carers' assessments etc, challenges of group work with carers.

#### External links:

- Feedback or info from policy work/links to contacts in parliament/national forums where we can take issues concerning our work to advance campaigns
- Some worrying trends: fewer social workers being appointed in senior positions in hospices. I would like to see the Association promoting courses on leadership. Maybe having partnership arrangements with Universities.
- Advocating for specialist palliative care social worker training at university level.

#### Other issues:

- After 25 years full membership - I would like to be more involved in some way but as I no longer practise I am not sure how this could be done - Friends still have a lot to offer.
- More opportunities to meet up with colleagues.
- I have been a member since 2009 and feel I have received virtually nothing from the APCS. I cannot see what I am paying for. I am seriously contemplating if I remain a member of APCS.

**Executive Committee**

**April 2019**