

Regional Social Work Awards 2026

Awards Judging Criteria

	Award Name:	Nomination Type:	Award Criteria:
1.	Beacon of Light Award	<p>Individual Award</p> <p>Nominations can be made for an individual social worker at any stage of their career and in any role – an opportunity to recognise leadership at all levels.</p>	<p>Submissions for this award should evidence how this person leads with the values of care and compassion. Examples should include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading self: leadership capability to intentionally behave and communicate in ways that facilitate change. • Leading with others: harness the intelligence and resourcefulness of the people they work with to achieve positive change and inspiring others. • Leading practice: supporting excellent practice and developing excellent practitioners through fostering innovation, learning and evaluation. • Leading the profession: contributing to the future evolution of the profession to meet current and future challenges. <p>(The Social Work Leadership Framework NI, 2022)</p>
2.	Bright Spark Award	<p>Individual Award</p> <p>Nominations can be made for an individual social worker who is within their first two years of practice at the time of applying (inclusive of the AYE year).</p>	<p>Submissions for this award should evidence the positive attitude and attributes of this recently qualified social worker</p> <p>Examples should include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion: for the profession and the role of social work in making a difference in people's lives. • Professional Curiosity: practice that questions 'how we do things' and identifies areas for improvement and innovation. • Development: willingness to learn and develop self and others. • Partnership: working with and for those who use services; connecting with communities and other professions and agencies to bring about change.

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3.	Constellation Award	<p>Team Award</p> <p>Nominations can be made for a team of social workers or social workers working together within a multidisciplinary team.</p>	<p>Submissions for this award should evidence the positive characteristics of a motivated team.</p> <p>Examples should include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates exceptional teamwork through trust and shared responsibility. • provides hope, advocacy, and compassionate support to individuals and families during their most challenging times. • works together to create collaborative solutions to complex challenges; working with communities and organisations to innovate. • fosters a culture of mutual support, compassion, kindness, resilience and encouragement that strengthens both team members and the people they work alongside.
4.	Lighting the Way Award	<p>Individual or Team Award</p> <p>Nominations can be made for an individual social worker, or a team of social workers, or social workers working together within a multidisciplinary team.</p>	<p>Submissions for this award should evidence the nominee(s) commitment to having learning and development at the heart of their practice.</p> <p>Examples should include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables: makes a difference to the development of others. • Encourages: promotes a vibrant, continuous learning culture. • Innovates: takes a unique approach to learning and development and research to ensure social workers are knowledgeable, skilled and confident.

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5.	Torch of Co-production Award	<p>Individual or Team Award</p> <p>Nominations can be made for an individual social worker, or a team of social workers, or social workers working together within a multidisciplinary team.</p>	<p>Submissions for this award should provide examples of the nominee(s) working alongside people with lived experience to create an outcome that benefits all.</p> <p>Examples should include how the TORCH approach to Co-production (DoH, 2021) has underpinned practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together – bringing the talents and knowledge of everyone together • Opportunities – creating opportunities and addressing issues • Relationships – inclusive and meaningful • Change – real, positive change should result • Hear – not just listen but hear what has been said – by everyone
6.	Legacy of Light Award	<p>Individual Award</p> <p>Nominations can be made for an individual social worker who has made a lasting contribution to social work.</p>	<p>This award celebrates a social worker who has made an exceptional contribution in their professional role. Submissions for this Award should provide examples of the long-lasting impact made by the social worker in 'leaving their mark'. Examples should include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championing best practice in the nominee's area of social work expertise. • Demonstrating innovative and creative approaches to social work practice. • Contribution to education, training and the development of others. • Publishing research. • Making a difference to the lives of children, families, or individuals through dedicated and compassionate practice, working with service users. • Demonstrating an enduring commitment to the promotion of social justice through campaign activities or social work practice.