ICPHAA

Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association

GOVERNANCE OF THE ASSOCIATION

Environmental & Social Governance Policy

ICPHAA's commitments to operate in an environmentally responsible way, to promote access, inclusion and wellbeing, and to govern itself in a way that earns public trust.

REFERENCE	ICPHAA-POL-34	VERSION	1.0
EFFECTIVE	9 November 2026	NEXT REVIEW	9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors		

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APPLIES TO	The ICPHAA Board of Directors, Registry, Accreditation Department, staff and volunteers in the Association's own operations; members are encouraged to apply its principles in their practice.
VERSION	1.0 · effective 9 November 2026 · next review 9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors
CONTACT	ICPHAA Registry · admin@icphaa.ie

AT A GLANCE

- ICPHAA works digitally by default, cutting paper, travel and waste wherever this does not reduce accessibility.
- Environmental and social factors are considered in procurement and event planning.
- Access and inclusion are central: removing barriers for members, applicants and the public.
- Practitioner wellbeing is treated as a social responsibility, not an afterthought.
- ESG commitments are overseen by the Board and reported to members.

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1. Purpose

The Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association (ICPHAA) exists to support good mental health and wellbeing in Ireland. That purpose is connected to the health of the communities and environment in which people live. This policy sets out how ICPHAA takes account of environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations in the way it operates and makes decisions.

The commitments in this policy are proportionate to the size and nature of a voluntary, not-for-profit professional association. They focus on practical steps the Association can take and measure, rather than on broad claims.

2. Scope

This policy applies to ICPHAA's own operations: its administration, events and CPD activities, communications, procurement and governance. It applies to the ICPHAA Board of Directors, the Registry, the Accreditation Department, staff and volunteers. Members are not required to adopt it in their own practice, but are encouraged to apply its principles where they can.

3. Principles

- **Responsibility.** ICPHAA takes responsibility for the environmental and social effects of its activities.
- **Proportionality.** Commitments are realistic for an association of ICPHAA's size and are reviewed as it grows.
- **Accessibility first.** Environmental measures must never make the Association less accessible, particularly to people with a disability or limited digital access.
- **Honesty.** ICPHAA does not overstate its achievements and reports on progress plainly.
- **Integration.** ESG considerations are part of ordinary decision-making, not a separate exercise.

4. Environmental responsibility

ICPHAA's main environmental effects come from energy use, travel, paper, printing and the goods and services it buys. The Association commits to:

- **Digital by default.** Administering membership, renewals, certificates and communications electronically, and publishing policies and guidance online rather than in print, while providing accessible alternatives on request.
- **Lower-travel events.** Offering CPD and meetings online or in hybrid form where this works well, choosing venues accessible by public transport for in-person events, and encouraging shared travel.
- **Less waste.** Avoiding single-use items at events, minimising printed materials and branded giveaways, and recycling where possible.
- **Responsible digital practice.** Choosing reputable digital service providers, managing data storage efficiently and deleting data that is no longer needed in line with the retention schedule, which is good data protection practice as well as good environmental practice.
- **Responsible procurement.** Taking environmental performance into account, alongside value for money and quality, when choosing suppliers and venues.
- **Responsible stewardship of funds.** Holding the Association's reserves securely and, where practical and consistent with the Financial Risk & Compliance Policy, in a way that reflects its values.

Measuring progress

ICPHAA keeps simple records that show whether these commitments are being met, for example the share of events offered online or in hybrid form, the extent to which administration is paperless, and the environmental information requested from major suppliers. It uses these records to decide on further improvements and reports on them to members. It does not set or publish targets it cannot measure.

5. Social responsibility: access and inclusion

The social dimension of ICPHAA's work is central to its purpose. Building on the value of justice set out in the Vision Statement & Ethos, the Association commits to:

- making its website, publications and processes as accessible as possible, using plain language and providing information in alternative formats on request;
- making reasonable adjustments for members, applicants, event participants and people raising concerns who have a disability or other barrier to participation;
- applying the Equal Status Acts 2000–2018 and the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 in all its activities;
- encouraging diversity in its membership, governance and panels, and welcoming practitioners from the many communities that make up Irish society;
- keeping the cost of membership and CPD under review with regard to fairness, particularly for Student Members and those early in their careers.

ICPHAA recognises that some people face particular barriers to entering and progressing in the professions, including cost, distance from training centres, caring responsibilities, disability and language. The Association will look for practical ways to reduce these barriers, for example by offering CPD online and at varied times, recording sessions where participants agree, and providing clear guidance on the routes to each membership category.

Suppliers and partners

ICPHAA expects the organisations it works with to treat their own staff fairly, to respect human rights and to comply with the law. Where it has a choice, the Association prefers suppliers and partners whose practices are consistent with its values.

6. Social responsibility: practitioner wellbeing

ICPHAA values the wellbeing of practitioners equally with the wellbeing of clients. Practitioners who are well supported are better able to care for others, and burnout among practitioners is a risk to the public as well as to the individual. The Association commits to:

- promoting supervision, CPD, peer support and, where appropriate, personal therapy as part of sustainable practice;
- offering CPD and resources on self-care, resilience and safe working;
- handling compliance and concerns processes with care, recognising the stress they can cause;

- treating its own staff and volunteers fairly and with respect, as described in the Organisational Integrity policy.

7. Social responsibility: community and public mental health

Counselling, psychotherapy and allied healthcare make a real contribution to the health of communities across Ireland. ICPHAA contributes to the wider community by promoting understanding of counselling, psychotherapy and allied healthcare; by helping the public find and verify appropriately qualified practitioners at www.icphaa.ie/verify-certificate; by advocating for equitable access to mental health support; and by supporting members who offer low-cost or community-based services, while making sure such services meet the same ethical and professional standards as any other.

The Association also aims to support public understanding of mental health by providing accurate, non-sensational information when it is asked to comment, by encouraging members to share their expertise responsibly, and by signposting people to appropriate sources of help. In all of this, ICPHAA is careful not to make claims about outcomes that it cannot support.

8. Governance

Good governance is the foundation of everything in this policy. ICPHAA's governance arrangements are set out in the Organisational Governance and Organisational Integrity policies and include a Board of Directors accountable to the membership, the open management of conflicts of interest, sound financial controls under the Financial Risk & Compliance Policy, respect for data protection, and openness under the Public-Facing Transparency Policy. ICPHAA is a not-for-profit association: any surplus is reinvested in its purposes.

Strong governance also protects the social value the Association creates. Clear standards, fair processes for concerns and honest communication help clients to find safe and ethical support, help members to practise with confidence, and help maintain public trust in counselling, psychotherapy and allied healthcare as a whole.

The Board considers environmental and social effects when it makes significant decisions, for example on events, suppliers or new services, and records how it has done so.

9. Responsibilities

ICPHAA

- The Board owns this policy, sets priorities and oversees progress.
- The Registry and Accreditation Department apply the policy in their day-to-day work, particularly in communications, events and procurement.
- Staff and volunteers follow the policy and suggest improvements.

Members

- Are encouraged to consider the environmental effects of their own practice, for example through secure online working where it suits the client, and paper-light administration.
- Are encouraged to support access and inclusion in their practice, in line with the ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members.

10. Monitoring, reporting and review

The Board reviews progress on the commitments in this policy each year and reports to members on what has been done. Suggestions from members are welcome at admin@icphaa.ie. The policy is reviewed by the date shown on the cover, and earlier if the Association's activities change significantly.

READ ALONGSIDE

- Vision Statement & Ethos
- Organisational Governance
- Organisational Integrity
- Events & Training Policy
- Digital & Practice Environment Policy
- Public-Facing Transparency Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

VERSION	DATE	CHANGE	APPROVED BY
1.0	9 November 2026	Reissued in the ICPHAA policy framework (replaces the former ICPA version).	ICPHAA Board of Directors

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