

Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard

**Framework for Continuing
Professional Development
(CPD) in the Advice Sector**

Updated February 2021

Framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the Advice Sector

Foreword:

The 'Framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the Advice Sector' was developed and agreed as part of the Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard in 2016.

This is the latest version of the framework which reflects sector changes and training developments, and support information for advisers. However, it is important to note that there has been no change to the requirements of the framework as related to the Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard, and CPD requirements of the standard remain the same.

Framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the Advice Sector - 2021

1. Introduction:

The Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard began to be implemented across the advice sector in Northern Ireland for generalist, voluntary advice services in 2016. To date, some specialist advice services have also implemented and adhere to the standard. As a condition of the Quality Standard advisers must meet the following requirements in relation to their competence:

- Only fully trained advisers provide unsupervised advice to clients
- All advisers work a minimum of 7 advice hours per week
- All advisers have successfully completed the standard adviser training deemed to be the required standard by the NIAQS as a minimum. (See [Appendix A](#))
- All full time advisers have completed a minimum of 3 days (18 Hours) professional development in the current year (part-time advisers – 2 days/12 Hours).
- Advisers only provide advice in specialised areas of work if they have completed the necessary training (and annual updates) as specified by legislation or the relevant regional organisation (e.g. Money and Debt, Immigration etc.).

The CPD Framework was developed In order to support advisers to meet the CPD requirements of the Quality Standard and in turn the Quality Standard itself. The CPD Framework for advisers is outlined in this document.

2. What is CPD and Why is it Important for the Advice Sector:

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or Continuing Professional Education (CPE) is the means by which people maintain their knowledge and skills related to their professional lives. CPD is a combination of approaches, ideas and techniques that will help advisers manage their own learning and growth. The focus of CPD is firmly on results – the benefits that professional development can bring to the organisation, adviser and service users (clients) in the real world. It is a continual process of lifelong learning.

It is essential that all advisers keep their knowledge and skills up to date and relevant to their roles and responsibilities in order to maintain and improve the quality of their practice. CPD is essential for:

- Helping individuals and organisations to maintain a high quality service and improve performance.
- Helping individuals to maintain professional knowledge, skills and competence and to keep this up to date.
- Helping individuals to seek appropriate support if their training and development needs require involvement in new areas of activity.
- Helping individuals to plan their learning and identify/meet their learning needs.
- Helping to ensure individuals and organisations provide a professional, up to date and effective service.
- Helping to equip individuals and organisations to meet the needs and expectations of clients.
- Helping individuals to achieve their career goals and add to their personal brand.

Therefore, advisers should continue to learn and develop throughout their professional lives, and undertake as much CPD as necessary to enable them to provide up-to-date and holistic advice which meets client need.

3. NIAQS Continued Professional Development Framework

3.1 Introduction to the Framework:

Annual records of CPD should be kept and maintained to demonstrate CPD undertaken. As explained in Section 1, to meet the requirements of the Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard, the CPD framework must be followed and completed accordingly. Advisers must complete a declaration agreeing that they will comply with the requirements of this framework (**Appendix B**). They must be able to produce their CPD record when called for review to attain/retain the quality standard.

This document sets out the minimum requirements that must be met by advisers in respect of their CPD. These minimum requirements apply to all paid and volunteer advisers, and meeting the standard requirements is not negated by factors such as part-time working. However, there are certain conditions in which an adviser may be exempt from meeting all of some of the CPD requirements, for example, if they are on maternity leave or sick leave.

3.2: CPD Requirements:

To meet the requirements of the CPD framework an adviser must:

- Keep a legible record of their CPD. This can be kept electronically or in paper based format.
- Undertake a minimum of 18 Hours (Points) of CPD per year for full-time advisers, and 12 Hours (Points) per year for part-time advisers.
- Make a minimum of 5 entries per year which reflect how they have developed/maintained their knowledge, skills and competence of advice.
- Entries must include at least 3 different types of development activities per year (e.g. Face-to-face course, seminar, self-study etc.).
- Submit their CPD for review when requested.
- Entries within their CPD record must address learning needs that are relevant to their current role.
- If there are gaps in their CPD record (e.g. if an adviser is unable/exempt from meeting all or some of the CPD requirements due to sick leave or maternity leave) this should be recorded on their record and verified by their line manager.

In circumstances where a CPD record is reviewed and an adviser does not meet the minimum requirements they may be required to provide supplementary information (e.g. to verify activities), provide further evidence of CPD undertaken, and/or undertake additional CPD activities to meet the requirements.

3.3 Activities That Count as CPD and the Points System:

The following activities may be recorded as CPD, however, additional activities may also be included if they lead to learning:

CPD Activity	Definition	CPD Hours/Points
Formal Training/Qualifications	<p>This includes any training where candidates must complete and submit a formal assessment (e.g. assessment questions/activities, portfolio of evidence, examinations) for marking and verification. This includes regulated (on the Regulated Qualifications Framework – previously Qualifications & Credit Framework) and non-regulated qualifications.</p> <p>This includes both accredited (Awarding Body) and non-accredited training.</p> <p>The training can be via face-to-face, blended learning, distance learning or on-line learning methods.</p>	<p>Full Day Training – 1 point per hour to a maximum of 6 hours/points per training day.</p> <p>Half Day Training (or less) 1 point per hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points per half training day.</p> <p>Note: For formal training self-study time (e.g. pre-coursework, homework, research time etc.) can count towards CPD hours.</p> <p>On-line, Distance Learning or Blended Learning are based on hours spent to the same maximum values as above.</p>
Non-Formal Training	<p>This includes any training where candidates complete a training session where no formal assessment is required. Candidates may receive a certificate of attendance but not of achievement.</p> <p>The training can be via face-to-face, blended learning, distance learning or on-line learning methods.</p>	<p>Full Day Training – 1 point per hour to a maximum of 6 hours/points per training day.</p> <p>Half Day Training (or less) 1 point per hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points per half training day.</p> <p>On-line, Distance Learning or Blended Learning are based on time spent to the same maximum values as above.</p>
Meetings/Events	<p>This includes events where learning is acquired, for example, Adviser Forum Meetings, Information Sessions, Ask the Expert Sessions, Conferences, Seminars, Workshops, Consultation Events, Discussion Forums and so on.</p>	<p>Based on 1 point per hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points for a half-day, 6 hours/points for a full day.</p> <p>Events under 1 hour will not be counted.</p>
Self-Directed Learning	<p>This includes reading of relevant information and up-dates e.g. Policy Papers, Policy Responses, Consultation Response, Journal Articles, News Articles, News Letters, Books, Sector Publications, Podcasts and so on.</p>	<p>Based on 1 point per hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points for a half-day of study, 6 hours/points for a full day of study.</p> <p>Periods of self-directed learning can be added together, however a total period of under 1 hour will not be counted.</p>

Researching/Writing Resources/Papers	This includes researching, contributing towards and/or writing/development of research papers, training materials, writing policy papers, articles for journals, consultation papers, newsheets and so on.	Based on 1 point per hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points for a half-day of research/writing, 6 hours/points for a full day of research/writing. Periods of research/writing can be added together, however a total period of under 1 hour will not be counted.
Training/Presentation Delivery	This includes delivery of training including formal, non-formal, information sessions, seminars, conferences, presentations, induction training and so on.	Full Day Training – 1 point per hour to a maximum of 6 hours/points per training day. Half Day Training (or less) 1 point per Hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points per half training day. Note: Preparation and assessment time (e.g. familiarisation with materials, updating, marking, interaction with participants and so on) can be counted towards delivery time. Tutoring via distance learning or of an on-line/blended course will be based on time-spent to the same maximum values as above.
Induction Training	This includes induction into a new role/ department/ organisation.	Based on 1 point per hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points for a half-day induction, 6 hours/points for a full day induction. Periods of induction training can be added together, however a total period of under 1 hour will not be counted.
Other	This may include on-the-job training, shadowing, peer-to-peer learning.	Based on 1 point per hour to a maximum of 3 hours/points for a half-day, 6 hours/points for a full day. Periods of training can be added together, however a total period of under 1 hour will not be counted.

Please note: The list above is not exhaustive, but designed to provide an indication of the types of CPD activity that may be undertaken. As well as planned activities learning can occur unexpectedly, for example, through on the job training, shadowing, peer-to-peer support. Therefore as well as defined activities, unspecified learning (Other) can be included.

The table above explains how CPD Hours (Points) can be awarded. In the main CPD Hours (Points) are based on 1 Hour of CPD (Point) per 1 Hour spent to a maximum of 6 Hours (Points) per day and 3 Hours (Points) per half-day.

Example:

Eoin completed the following CPD activities:

CPD	Actual Time spent on CPD	CPD Hours (Points) Awarded
Two Day Formal Training (OCNNI Accredited)- 7 Hours a day	14 Hours	12
Ask the Expert Session (1.5 Hour event)	1.5 Hours	1
2 Hours spent on writing a consultation response	2 Hours	2
30 minutes spent on peer-to-peer learning	30 Minutes	0
3 hours spent on research for a consultation	3 Hours	3
Total CPD	21 Hours	18 Hours (Points)

The actual time Eoin spent on his CPD activities is 21 Hours, however the Framework would award 18 Hours (Points) of CPD. Eoin has completed 5 entries and a mixture of at least 3 different development activities so meets the Framework requirements.

3.4. Recording CPD

Advisers will need to record their CPD in the Recording Template provided ([Appendix C](#)). This should be updated on an on-going basis after each activity has been completed. The CPD Framework sets out the **minimum** CPD requirements but it is expected that advisers should complete the necessary training to meet their training and development needs (which may exceed the minimum requirements).

3.4.1 Recording Template

A copy of the Recording Template is included in Appendix B. Advisers will need to ensure this is completed. The template includes information about the development activity, why it is important and the impact (e.g. on practice/for the organisation). Records should be completed on an annual basis with the recording period clearly documented.

An example of a completed record has been included in [Appendix D](#) to help advisers to understand the process and complete their own records.

3.4.2 Good Practice in Recording CPD

We recommend that advisers keep relevant documentation such as training notes, journal articles, consultation responses, meeting minutes, conference schedules/papers and so on which will help keep notes in one place for reference purposes. In addition documentation that provides evidence of attendance such as training certificates, sign in sheets, confirmation e-mails, invoices, and so should be retained for verification purposes if required.

Appendix A

Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard Minimum Training Requirements

1. Generalist Qualification:

Current standard adviser training deemed to be the required standard by the NIAQS as a minimum for a generalist adviser include the following:

- Level 4 Certificate or Extended Certificate in Social Security Advice (Adviser NI)
- Level 3 Certificate in Generalist Advice
- Adviser Training Programme (ATP)
- Welfare Rights Adviser Programme
- NVQ Level 3 Certificate in Advice & Guidance
- NVQ Level 4 Diploma in Advice & Guidance
- Level 3 Award in Providing Initial Legal Advice
- Level 4 Certificate in Providing Initial Legal Advice & Information
- Level 4 Certificate in Providing Specialist Legal Advice
- Level 4 Diploma in Providing Specialist Legal Advice & Casework
- Wiseradviser NI Learning Pathway: Advice Work
- Wiseradviser NI Learning Pathway: Casework/Specialist
- Wiseradviser NI Learning Pathway: Court Representation
- Older Person Adviser Course
- Providing Specialist Advice to Older People on their Rights Under the Law
- Housing Adviser Training Programme

Any one or more of the above programmes (or equivalent) meets the minimum training requirements for a generalist adviser.

2. Case-Recording:

In addition advisers **MUST** have completed training in their relevant case-recording system, (e.g. Advice Pro or a bespoke system).

3. Additional Recommendations:

We would also recommend a basic level of training in the following areas as essential for **ALL** generalist advisers (to work towards) if they are **not** covered in the Generalist Qualification above:

- Case Management
- Lone Working (if appropriate)
- Advice Channels (e.g. telephone advice, e-mail advice, self-help)
- Triage and Interview Skills (including signposting and referral)
- Data Protection
- Social Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk
- Financial Capability
- Vulnerable Clients

- Suicide Prevention Training
- Quality Processes and Advice Principles
- Consumer Law
- Debt & Money
- Employment Law
- Disability Law
- Discrimination Law
- Education Law
- Health & Mental Health Law
- Human Rights Law
- Immigration Law
- Housing Law
- Benefits & Welfare Reform

Contact your Regional Support Organisation for information about training available. Your own organisation may specify additional CPD requirements.

4. Other Minimum Requirements:

It is important to note that there are some areas of specialist advice that advisers cannot advise on unless they have the required training. Those advising in specific areas may also need to meet additional CPD requirements. See below for details:

i. Debt Advice:

The Money & Pension Service (MaPS) Quality Framework includes 2 elements, the Organisational Quality Framework (organisational requirements, such as governance to be met) and the Individual Quality Framework (minimum training and CPD requirements of individuals to be met). All Money and Pension Service (MaPS) and/or Department for Communities (DfC) funded debt advisers must meet minimum training requirements equivalent to the MaPS Individual Quality Framework Requirements relevant to their role, as well as the ongoing CPD requirements. In NI these can be met as follows:

Role	Training Requirements
Initial Contact & Support Work Minimum Requirements:	Wiseradviser NI Money Advice Initial Contact & Support Worker Training Pathway– Provided by Advice NI; or
	Other Money and Pension Service accredited training at this level
Advice Work Minimum Requirements:	Wiseradviser NI Money Adviser Training Programme for Northern Ireland Advice Work Pathway– Provided by Advice NI; or
	Other Money and Pension Service accredited training at this level
Casework/Specialist Minimum Training Requirements:	Wiseradviser NI Specialist Money Adviser Training Programme for Northern Ireland Casework-Specialist Pathway – Provided by Advice NI; or
	Other Money and Pension Service accredited training at this level
Court Representation Minimum Training Requirements:	Wiseradviser NI Money Advice Court Representation Training Programme Northern Ireland Court Representation Pathway– Provided by Advice NI; or
	Other Money and Pension Service accredited training at this level
Supervision Training Requirements:	Wiseradviser NI Supervision Pathway – Provided by Advice NI
	Other Money and Pension Service accredited training at this level

Further information about the MaPS Quality Framework can be found at <https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/corporate/raising-standards>

The IMA and Money Advice Trust administer the MaPS CPD scheme for MaPS debt advisers. Information about the scheme can be found at <https://www.i-m-a.org.uk/cpd-scheme-for-maps-funded-advisers/>

Any adviser (including Generalist advisers and non-MaPS/DfC funded advisers) should have debt advice training at the Initial Contact and Support Level (see table above). It is recommended that Generalist advisers work towards accreditation at the Advice Work Level.

For debt advisers working outside of the MaPS/DfC contract, it is recommended that they adhere to the minimum training and CPD requirements outlined for MaPS/DfC funded advisers.

There are other specific training requirements for debt advisers advising in specific areas, for example:

- To become a Debt Relief Order Intermediary advisers must go through an application, eligibility and training process as laid out in the Debt Relief Orders (Designation of Competent Authorities) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2011/15/contents/made>. In Northern Ireland the minimum training element can be met through achievement of both the Wiseradviser NI DRO Intermediaries - The First Steps online training programme, and Wiseradviser NI DRO Intermediaries & Complex Cases training (<http://www.wiseradviser.org/northern-ireland>).
- To advise on the Consumer Credit Act advisers must meet the training requirements as laid out in the FCA Consumer Credit Sourcebook Guidance. The Consumer Credit Sourcebook (CONC) can be found at <https://www.handbook.fca.org.uk/handbook/CONC.pdf>. In Northern Ireland this minimum training requirement can be met through completion of the Wiseradviser NI Consumer Credit Act (CCA) online training and Wiseradviser NI Consumer Credit Act in Practice training (<http://www.wiseradviser.org/northern-ireland>)

ii. Immigration Advice

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) regulates immigration advisers, which means they must meet certain standards. To provide immigration advice (even at a basic level) an organisation must be registered with OISC and individual advisers must have the relevant level of OISC training. The levels include:

- Level 1: basic immigration advice within the Immigration Rules
- Level 2: more complex casework, including applications outside the Immigration Rules
- Level 3: appeals

(Please note all Advice NI Council funded members are covered by blanket registration with OISC however it is important the organisation and individual comply with OISC requirements).

For further information visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-become-a-regulated-immigration-adviser/how-to-become-a-regulated-immigration-adviser#immigration-advisers>.

There are various training providers of OISC Level 1, 2 and 3 training. Advisers must complete OISC approved training at the level to which they are working.

iii. Tribunal Representation/Legal Advocacy:

Advisers representing clients at tribunals require training in tribunal representation/legal advocacy.

Advisers **MUST** have completed one of the following training courses (**or equivalent**) in Tribunal Representation/Legal Advocacy to represent clients at tribunals:

- OCN NI Level 4 in Social Security Tribunal Representation (Provided by Advice NI)
- OCN NI Level 4 in Tribunal Representation (Provided by Law Centre NI)
- Wiseradviser NI Skills for Effective Advocacy (for debt advisers) provided by Advice NI

5. Training in the Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard

Training is available in the NIAQS for both those adhering to the standard and those assessing the standard. This includes training in:

- Case Recording and Quality of Advice Audit Training
- Quality of Advice - Assessors Advice Pro Training on Case File Reviews
- Quality of Advice – Members Assessors Workshop

For further information about the training contact the Quality Team at Advice NI, Quality@adviceni.net.

Appendix B
Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard
CPD Framework Declaration

Name: _____

Role/Team: _____

CPD Period: From _____ **to** _____

I agree to comply with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard CPD Framework. To do this I will;

- Keep a legible record of my CPD using the recording template provided.
- Undertake a minimum of 18 Hours (Points) of CPD per year as a full-time adviser, or 12 Hours (Points) per year as a part-time adviser.
- Make a minimum of 5 entries per year which reflect how I have developed/maintained my knowledge, skills and competence of advice.
- Include at least 3 different types of development activities per year (e.g. Face-to-face course, seminar, self-study etc.).
- Keep my CPD record up to date and submit for review if requested.
- Undertake CPD that addresses my learning needs and role requirements.
- Keep a record of gaps in my CPD, for example, due to sick leave or maternity leave, and ensure this is verified by my line manager.
- Keep evidence of my CPD activity for verification (e.g. certificates, invoices,
- Accurately record my CPD, including calculating hours/points as per Section 3.3 of the Framework.
- If an audit requires supplementary information, further evidence or additional activities to be met, I will ensure this is provided/undertaken.
- Complete my CPD record on an annual basis, clearly outlining the recording period.

Owners Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the Advice Sector Recording Template

Name:

Role:

Line Manger:

Development Period: From:

To:

Type of Development Activity	Start Date	Completion Date	Information Include information such as event attended, provider, duration, title of paper written/read etc.	CPD Hours/Points Awarded	Comments
See Table in Section 3.3				See Table in Section 3.3	

Total CPD Hours/Points Awarded for this Period:		Total Number of Valid CPD Entries for this Period:		Number of Different Learning Activities for this Period:	
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Signed by Plan Owner:

Signed By Line Manger:

Date:

Date:

Appendix D

Example of Completed CPD Record

Name: Juile Connor

Role: Adviser

Line Manger: Sarah Hill

Development Period: From: April 2020

To: March 2021

Type of Development Activity	Start Date	Completion Date	Information Include information such as event attended, provider, learning type (e.g. face-to-face, on line, blended) duration, title of paper written/read etc.	CPD Hours/Points Awarded	Comments
Formal Training	1/10/20	1/10/20	On-going Level 4 Extended Certificate in Social Security Advice. Blended learning. 4 Units completed 6 Units to go. 6 Full days (including 1 live-online session)- 30 Hours to date in this period.	30	I aim to complete in Summer of 2021
Informal Training	1/5/20	1/5/20	Overview of Universal Credit - Half -day live-online training provided by Advice NI.	3	
Informal Training	30/6/20	30/6/20	Providing Telephone Advice – One day live online training – Wiseradviser NI	6	
Researching/Writing Resources/Papers	18/07/20	29/07/20	Researched and developed policy paper on the impact of Covid-19 to the Advice Sector. Two full days spent on this within the period outlined.	12	
Training Delivery	15/12/20	15/12/20	Presented at a face-to-face Training Event for Advice NI in Working with Clients with Mental Health Difficulties. Presentation and Q/A was 1.5 hours. Preparation and development of slides was 2 hours.	3	

Total CPD Hours/Points Awarded for this Period:	54	Total Number of Valid CPD Entries for this Period:	5	Number of Different Learning Activities for this Period:	4
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Signed by Record Owner:

Signed By Line Manger:

Date:

Date:

