

Advice NI Strategic Direction

2025 - 2028

For Consultation

Thursday 30 January -
Friday 28 February 2025.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our draft Strategic Direction document which sets out the key strategic focus areas and the objectives which flow from them.

These focus areas and objectives have been determined through extensive consultation and engagement with our members, board, staff, and a range of key stakeholders and individuals over the past six months. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed.



The world is experiencing profound transformations, driven by global and local issues that significantly impact those most in need. Climate change, economic instability, and geopolitical conflict are reshaping the lives of millions, leading to rising levels of displacement, financial insecurity, and deepening inequalities.

These global crises are felt acutely in Northern Ireland, where economic pressures, housing challenges, digital exclusion, and the evolving immigration landscape are amplifying the vulnerability of many.

Inequalities in access to advice and support persist, as do the systemic barriers that marginalise communities and undermine the fabric of our society.

Advice services have never been more critical. They are a lifeline for individuals and families navigating these overlapping crises - helping people access their entitlements, resolve disputes, and build resilience.

Over the next three years, we are committed to expanding and improving our services to engage and support members to help meet these challenges, ensuring no-one is left behind.

Together, we can address the challenges impacting vulnerable people and ensure that advice services remain a cornerstone of support for everyone in need.

I hope you find the Strategic Direction clear and aligned with the many of the key issues highlighted through the consultation process.

Best regards,
Bob Stronge CEO



OUR MISSION

Advice NI mission is to work with members to address poverty and inequality and ensure accessible advice services across NI.



OUR VISION

Advice NI vision is of a society of confident, informed and active citizens who can access their rights and entitlements.

OUR VALUES



VALUES EXPLAINED

Advice NI holds a set of core values that are central to both what we do and how we do it. These values guide us in our work as a membership organisation and as a staff team and influence how we engage with our wider range of stakeholders.

- 1. Independence**
We make informed decisions ensuring impartiality and unbiased support for all.
- 2. Diversity and Inclusion**
We value and include people from all backgrounds and perspectives.
- 3. Equality and social justice**
We strive to reduce inequalities by championing the rights of all.
- 4. Integrity**
We will always act honestly and ethically, building trust with everyone we work with.
- 5. Transparency**
We are open and clear about our processes and decisions.
- 6. Quality**
We aim to provide excellent services that meet our member's and clients needs.
- 7. Collaborative working approach**
We believe in working together with others to achieve better results, recognising the power of collective effort to drive positive change.
- 8. Innovation and agility**
We welcome new ideas and quickly adapt to changes to stay effective.

COMMITMENT TO MEMBERS

Advice NI Members provide independent legal advice (information and advice, casework and/or representation) in one or more of the following areas of law – welfare rights, debt, tax, immigration, housing, consumer, asylum, community care, discrimination, education, employment, housing, mental health, public, human rights and administrative law.

Independent Advice Services promote equality, reduce vulnerability, prevent crisis and improve well-being.

Key Characteristics of Independent Advice Services

Impartial - Advice is free from bias or external influence and advisers act solely in the best interest of the client

Free at the point of delivery

Accessible to all

Confidential

Empowerment focused

Delivered by trained professionals who adhere to quality standards

Advice NI is committed to:

Our Growth and Sustainability Principle

We are responsive to a changing environment and always seek to collaborate rather than compete with member organisations.

Our Membership Value Proposition

We provide practical leadership and support to our members, to facilitate access to quality advice services in Northern Ireland.

UNDERPINNING KEY PRINCIPLES

This Strategic Plan is built on the principles of inclusion, empowerment, and justice. It outlines our Strategic Focus Areas which are underpinned by key priorities:



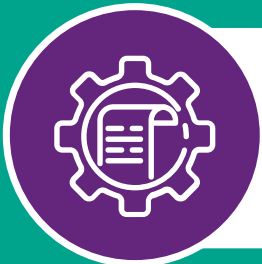
Empowering Vulnerable People:

Enhancing access to advice and support for those most at risk of exclusion.



Digital Inclusion:

Closing the digital divide by providing skills, tools, and tailored services to those who are digitally excluded.



Advocacy and Policy Influence:

Challenging systemic change to address inequalities and improve access to rights.



Fostering Understanding and Collaboration:

Work to understand the strategic priorities of our members and partners and help them understand ours, enabling closer alignment and impactful partnerships.



Sustainability and Growth:

Ensuring we have the resources, skills, and infrastructure to meet future demand.

The next 3 years

Below we set out our direction for the next 3 years which includes 4 key strategic focus areas:

1

Supporting the Membership

2

Supporting the Sustainability of Independent Advice Services

3

Promoting Independent Advice Services

4

Organisational Development

1 Supporting the Membership

A key focus of Advice NI activity is to support our membership. We will do this in a number of ways.

A) Quality of Advice Provision

1. We will ensure that our members are involved in and informed about the Department for Communities Quality Standard Review.
2. We will engage with the sector to clarify our role within the new NI Advice Quality Standard.

B) Training and Development of Staff and Volunteers

1. We will monitor emerging and evolving needs of the sector and continue to provide effective training to enable the advice sector to meet baseline, compliance, legal, quality and regulatory requirements.
2. We will collaborate with members to co-design and deliver bespoke and tailored solutions to meet their training needs.
3. We will make our training as accessible as possible to our members.

1

Supporting the Membership

C) Influencing Policy and Sharing Information

1. We will engage with and influence policy by collaborating with members to advocate on key issues and actively participate in broader sector policy work.
2. We will provide and communicate up-to-date, relevant information to ensure high quality of advice.
3. We will ensure systems and processes supporting social policy work are designed for maximum effectiveness to enable proactive engagement.

D) Advice NI Membership

1. We will clarify and communicate our purpose and benefits to our members.
2. We will strengthen engagement and prioritise face to face interactions and networking to build stronger relationships with our members.
3. We will support members to collaborate, promote best practice, share skills and engage in strategic conversations.

2

Supporting the Sustainability of Independent Advice Services

1. We will determine the actual cost of quality advice and use this information to make the case for independent advice services.
2. We will lobby and campaign with our members, Department for Communities and other funders to address recruitment and retention issues within the advice sector.
3. We will engage with members to support the diversification of services, delivery and resources across the sector.
4. We will address unmet need by using an evidence-based community development model and working in partnership with others.

3

Promoting and Advocating Accessible Independent Advice Services

1. We will work closely with our member organisations and develop a promotional strategy which raises the profile, impact and value of independent advice services.
2. We will strengthen our members' capacity to utilise different media channels to promote their services and the impact of the independent advice sector.
3. We will collaborate with members to ensure the integrity and efficiency of data insights.
4. We will work to address poverty and digital exclusion through supporting rights-based projects.

4

Organisation Development

1. We will undertake an organisation-wide review and upgrade of Advice NI's Communication Strategy to ensure efficacy and accessibility.
2. We will use new and existing digital technologies to make our organisation run more efficiently, improve our services and ensure everyone can access what they need.
3. We will work with our members to improve our helpline and digital services, maximising access and choice for clients.
4. We will implement and embed an equality, diversity and inclusion strategy across the organisation.
5. We will create opportunities for the Board to engage and deepen relationships with Advice NI members and staff.
6. We will develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to diversify funding sources over the next 3 years ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience against economic and political uncertainties.
7. We will ensure overall organisational effectiveness and the delivery of quality assured services by creating a positive work environment, congruent with Advice NI values, where staff are empowered to grow and develop as they pursue the mission of the organisation.



Contact information:

Advice NI
Forestview
Purdys Lane
Belfast
BT8 7AR

www.adviceni.net
[@AdviceNI](https://www.instagram.com/AdviceNI)



**Comments regarding the draft
Strategic Direction document can be
sent to:**

Deputy CEO Fiona Magee
fiona@adviceni.net

**Deadline for consultation is Friday
28th February 2025 at 5pm.**

