



## Supporting People News Bulletin. October 2008

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*(Occasionally, due to factors beyond our control, links may be broken or faulty. Full link addresses will also be supplied for those accessing non-electronic copies of this bulletin)*

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## Streamlined Quality Assessment Framework

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A number of supported housing schemes have been selected by the SP Team to take part in a pilot of a streamlined version of the QAF to run to the end of March 2009. The schemes selected are those projects scheduled for the review programme for 08/09, but for which the review process has not yet started

The new SP QAF for NI has not been published but it has been modelled on the CLG document being piloted in England. The number of prescriptive standards has been significantly reduced and, subject to achieving minimum standards, providers will have more scope to interpret the requirements for levels A and B.

Other important changes are:

- Combining risks and support planning
- Removal of category D
- Strengthening section on abuse
- Increased emphasis on user involvement
- Annual QAF returns

Link <i>(Click on text)</i>	Description	Full link
<a href="#">Draft revised QAF England</a>	Revised core objectives & standards	<a href="http://b3.manchester.gov.uk/speople/downloads/QAF_PILOT_CoreObjectives_DRAFT.pdf">http://b3.manchester.gov.uk/speople/downloads/QAF_PILOT_CoreObjectives_DRAFT.pdf</a>
<a href="#">Using the Revised QAF England</a>	Revised guidance notes for providers & authorities completing QAF assessment	<a href="http://b3.manchester.gov.uk/speople/downloads/QAF_PILOT_UsingtheQAF_DRAFT.pdf">http://b3.manchester.gov.uk/speople/downloads/QAF_PILOT_UsingtheQAF_DRAFT.pdf</a>

**These documents are for information only.** This is not a formal consultation exercise. **The NI version will vary slightly.** Feedback will be obtained via the pilots. Currently it is anticipated that the final documents will be launched after the pilots, probably at the start of the new financial year.

Contact [SP area team managers](#) for further information in relation to these developments.

[www.nihe.gov.uk/index/www\\_home/supporting\\_people-3/www-sp-contact-information.htm](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/www_home/supporting_people-3/www-sp-contact-information.htm)

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## Streamlined SP Scheme Review Process

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The SP Team has informed CHNI that the streamlined QAF will also be accompanied by a more streamlined approach to the service review process as well.

The basic elements of the review process have not been fundamentally altered or removed. The change is about a change in emphasis or focus. There will be less emphasis on quality assurance i.e. checking that projects have all the right policies and procedures in place. Quality should continue to be a major priority for providers. Providers must comply with the QAF, continually self-assess and improve. SP will still validate key aspects of the QAF to ensure minimum standards of health and safety are being adhered to.

However the priorities under review in future will focus more clearly on the other essential elements of the relationship between SP, providers and service users. This means SP will be focusing on-

- Service user outcomes
- Performance monitoring
- Contract compliance
- Strategic relevance
- Value for money
- Accreditation

As indicated earlier SP will continue to have a remit over quality and may seek to validate some or all aspects of this at their discretion. However this will not be their primary focus. It is to be hoped that if a service is successfully ticking all of the above boxes then the key elements of the QAF will be in place anyway.

The approach therefore will be less process driven and more connected to outcomes.

Contact [SP area team managers](#) for further information in relation to these developments.

[www.nihe.gov.uk/index/wwu\\_home/supporting\\_people-3/wwu-sp-contact-information.htm](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/wwu_home/supporting_people-3/wwu-sp-contact-information.htm)

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## Changes to the backdating rules for Housing Benefit claims and SP payments

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The SP Team has informed CHNI that the NIHE will be implementing changes to the rules governing the backdating of HB payments. SP subsidy payments follow HB rules so this has implications for SP payments as well.

### HB Changes

The new arrangements will:

- Reduce the time for claiming HB for Pension Credit age customers from 12 months to three months, and
- Reduce the maximum period for which HB claims may be backdated for working age customers from 52 weeks to six months.
- The burden of proving good cause will continue to rest with the customer.
- The new rules affecting the backdating of HB came in on 06 October 2008.

### SP Changes

- SP subsidy payments follow HB rules and consequently a service user only qualifies for SP subsidy from the date a HB claim begins.
- SP wrote to all providers about HB changes on 10 October. In the letter they state 'backdating of SP subsidy payments in instances of late notification from providers, will not now be made for a period in excess of 13 weeks'.
- This appears to indicate that all late claims for SP payments will be subject to a maximum 3-month backdating period. The distinction set out in the HB proposals between pension age customers and working age customers is not being applied in the context of SP payments.

**The revised SP proposals will be implemented from 10 November 2008.**

### Provider's duty to notify changes in circumstances

Providers are reminded of their contractual responsibility to SP to notify them about changes in relation to service users who start or stop receiving support in a scheme. It is even more critical now that providers ensure the appropriate notification is forwarded to SP in a timely fashion as this will provide safeguards to associations / providers should they be challenged or involved in any backdating disputes with claimants. **This may help protect providers in any disputes over liability for potential underpayments.**

## Further Information

**HB:** These new regulations concerning the backdating of housing benefit in Northern Ireland were made on 3rd October 2008 and came into operation on 6th October 2008. This is an unusually short time period between the making of the regulations and the operative date and guidance could not be issued until the regulations were made. The Department for Social Development (DSD) has issued guidance to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Land and Property Services who administer the benefit.

- Guidance that the DSD issues on the legislative changes is to be put onto the Department's website as soon as possible.
- The Housing Executive is also to highlight this change on their website as well. Again due to the short time span between the making of the regulations and the operative date, this is still in progress.

## SP

A copy of the [SP letter](#) in relation to the changes to payments rule is available via the NIFHA website. (*Full link: [www.nifha.org/research-and-policy/supporting-people/](http://www.nifha.org/research-and-policy/supporting-people/)*)

For further information relating to the SP changes please contact:		
Name	Telephone	Email
Eamonn Marley	028 9031 8486	<a href="mailto:eamonn.marley@nihe.gov.uk">eamonn.marley@nihe.gov.uk</a>
Aidan McGrath	028 9031 8013	<a href="mailto:aidan.mcgrath@nihe.gov.uk">aidan.mcgrath@nihe.gov.uk</a>

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## NI Support Benchmarks

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Please note that the NI Support Benchmarks project for 08/09 was officially launched on 02/10/08. This tool can measure cost, performance, quality standards, and user satisfaction (as measured in your organisation).

All supported housing services are invited to take part in the project this year at no charge. This tool can help organisations to

- Develop their understanding of the balance between costs and quality
  - Scrutinise their costs more effectively
  - Increase their knowledge of the provider market
  - Identify the potential for changes and the scope, if any, for efficiencies.
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- **Download the guidance and spreadsheets** from [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org)
  - **Advice from:** [sitrahelpline@sitra.org](mailto:sitrahelpline@sitra.org)

**The closing date is 03 November 2008**

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## Briefing paper for supported housing professionals on data sharing good practice and principles

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**Support Action Net**. Introduction to the principles of Information Law:

A briefing paper for supported housing professionals

*Full link to Support Action Net document (PDF):*

[www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting\\_people/Support Action Net briefing paper on data sharing.pdf](http://www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting_people/Support%20Action%20Net%20briefing%20paper%20on%20data%20sharing.pdf)

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## Homelessness Awareness Week 1-7 December 2008

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### 5 December 2008 - Five-A-Side Charity Cup

CHNI, in conjunction with Lisburn City Council and the IFA, is organising the 2nd annual CHNI Charity Cup. This 5-a-side football tournament is for all residents and staff of temporary accommodation and other homelessness projects and organisations.

**Date:** Friday 5th December 2008 (1/2 day event, a.m.)

**Venue:** Brook Activity Centre, Lisburn

[Click here for map](#) or [Click here for further details of venue](#)

**Deadline for entries:** Friday 14 November 2008

[Click here for registration form](#) ([www.chni.org.uk/UserFiles/File/footy\\_registration08.doc](http://www.chni.org.uk/UserFiles/File/footy_registration08.doc))

### Homeless Awareness Week: Participate! Christmas Card Competition

**Participate is back!** This time we are inviting you to get seasonal! Why not have a go at creating your own Christmas card - paint, draw or make! The winning picture will be printed as CHNI's Christmas Card 2008

- [Click here for flyer](#) (full link: [http://www.chni.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Christmas\\_competition.PDF](http://www.chni.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Christmas_competition.PDF))
- More information at CHNI's website: [www.chni.org.uk/sp-projects.php](http://www.chni.org.uk/sp-projects.php)

### CALL FOR EVENTS FOR HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK!!

Should you, one of your projects, or any of your service users wish to organise an event, however big or small, it's not too late. This can be an event run in a single project or with partners, including the wider public. Get your thinking caps on!!

**If you would like to discuss your ideas, or should you have any queries,** please contact George ([info@chni.org.uk](mailto:info@chni.org.uk)) or Alison ([alison@chni.org.uk](mailto:alison@chni.org.uk)) at CHNI for a chat: telephone: 90246660

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## Supporting People Communications Strategy

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You can download the Supporting People's [draft Communications Strategy](#) as a PDF document and a copy of the [joint response](#) from CHNI and NIFHA.

**Full link for draft Communications Strategy:**

[www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting\\_people/Draft\\_Supporting\\_People\\_Communication\\_Strategy\\_with\\_Appendices.pdf](http://www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting_people/Draft_Supporting_People_Communication_Strategy_with_Appendices.pdf)

**Full link for joint response from NIFHA and CHNI:**

[www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting\\_people/SP\\_Comms\\_Strategy\\_-\\_joint\\_NIFHA\\_CHNI\\_response.pdf](http://www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting_people/SP_Comms_Strategy_-_joint_NIFHA_CHNI_response.pdf)

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## Vetting and Barring Scheme – FREE Information Sessions

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The new Vetting & Barring Scheme, established under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation, will be **fully operational from 12 October 2009**.

In order to prepare employers, organisations, regulatory bodies and workers to undertake their responsibilities and requirements under the new scheme, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has commissioned the Volunteer Development Agency (VDA) to **deliver a series of Information Sessions between October 2008 and October 2009**.

There is capacity for up to 80 participants at each session, so book early to avoid disappointment. Most sessions will run from 9.30am to 1pm. Details of sectors and locations are listed below, along with booking instructions. Health, Education and Voluntary/Community Sectors sessions will be held in a number of locations.

**To book a place online please go to: [www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)**

- Under the heading 'What we do' click on 'Child Protection'
- Click on 'Vetting & Barring Scheme Information Sessions'
- Follow booking instructions.

If you do not have access to the Internet, or have difficulty with online booking, **please contact: Julie-Ann Ashe** at VDA on 028 9081 8316 or [julie-ann@volunteering-ni.org](mailto:julie-ann@volunteering-ni.org)

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## Access NI - emergency arrangements

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Temporary emergency arrangements to facilitate employment in certain areas of health and social care within strictly defined parameters, pending receipt of enhanced criminal record disclosure certificates requested from AccessNI have been introduced.

They will be terminated at a date appointed by the Department. It is intended that these measures will not extend beyond the end of 2008. Following termination of the temporary arrangements, existing legislative and policy requirements in this area will resume with immediate effect.

Full details of the arrangements may be read in [Temporary emergency Access NI arrangements August 08.](#) (WORD Document)

Full link to Temporary emergency Access NI arrangements document:

[www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting\\_people/Temporary\\_emergency\\_Access\\_NI\\_arrangements\\_August\\_08.pdf](http://www.nifha.org/filestore/documents/supporting_people/Temporary_emergency_Access_NI_arrangements_August_08.pdf)

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### Information about the SP News Bulletin

Supported housing news from CHNI is covered in this bi-monthly bulletin. CHNI would encourage contributions from providers, commissioners and policy makers. Organisations can use this bulletin to promote relevant services and events of their own and to share information, and good practice etc. CHNI may occasionally approach providers for contributions or their opinion on particular issues. If you would like to contribute an article please contact Malcolm Christy on 028 9024 6440, or email [mchristy@chni.org.uk](mailto:mchristy@chni.org.uk)

*The views expressed in this bulletin, unless stated otherwise, are those of CHNI and they do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of any other agencies or organisations.*