



NCAN Membership Policy



Who can apply to join?

To join NCAN, an organisation must either directly provide advice in a social welfare law category or sub-contract an advice giving service in a social welfare law category. Advice services must be free at the point of use (This is to exclude profit-making companies such as debt management firms) Members could include -

- 3rd Sector bodies involved in giving advice
- Local Authority departments/services that give advice
- Private Solicitors' Firms offering limited free advice e.g. an initial half hour and/or Legal Aid
- Organisations that sub-contract free advice services e.g. Big C

What are the criteria for joining?

Any organisation wishing to join the Network must have an externally awarded quality mark, for example a Community Legal Services Quality Mark or Lexcel.

If the organisation does not have a relevant quality mark they can still join the Network but additional information must be provided –

- Strategy or Development Plan for your service for the next three years
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure
- Policies that ensure advice given is impartial, independent and confidential
- A procedure for recording the advice given and action taken
- A procedure for checking the quality of the advice
- A Training and Development policy
- A procedure to ensure advisors have access to the information they need and this is kept up to date
- Details of Professional Indemnity Insurance

Membership Assessment Process

The NCAN Quality Working Group will independently assess the information and this will result in either -

1. Acceptance with no development required from the new member

2. Acceptance with developments required

1. Acceptance with no development points required from the new member

- Quality Working Group makes recommendation for acceptance to the Network

2. Acceptance with development points required

Quality Working Group makes recommendation for acceptance to the Network based on the following -

- A recommended development plan to meet the minimum requirement of the Network
- Nominated support by existing partners to the new members to enable them to meet the developmental plan
- Membership to the Network will be time limited to allow review of the development plan

Is it free to join?

- Yes, there are no costs associated with joining the Network

What are the benefits of joining?

- Publicity and marketing – promote your organisation through NCAN newsletters and the website
- The opportunity to become part of a 'common referral system'.
- The facility to refer clients on for further quality assured advice through the common referral system.
- Free or subsidised shared training opportunities – with the chance to influence topics
- Support with quality issues through workshops and information
- Keep up to date via the newsletter and website
- Attend Network meetings and be consulted on the focus of the project's work
- Practitioners' workshops – the opportunity to meet with others working in your field and exchange ideas and good practice.
- Funding opportunities resulting from joint funding bids with Network partners

What responsibilities come with joining?

- Refer and signpost clients where appropriate
- Act on training and support provided
- Input evidence for campaigning for change or other research projects
- Communicate experience of the Network and the benefits of working together as a Network to other organisations
- Input into the practitioner and Network meetings

What about non-advice giving organisations?

Organisations for which advice giving is not their core function can still access information about the Network via the website and make referrals into the Network, but they will not be members and cannot therefore access the other benefits.

For information or an application form please contact

Rosie Thompson
Norfolk Community Law Service
Boardman House
Redwell Street
Norwich
NR2 4SL

T: 01603 496392

F: 01603 496336

E: rosie@norfolkcan.org.uk