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# Older Person Adviser Course

## Needs Analysis Research Report 2008

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# **Older Person Adviser Course Needs Analysis Research Report**

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**Research conducted as part of a project funded by A2B**



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# Older Person Adviser Course Research Report

## 1. Background and Literature Review:

### 1.1. Background:

Advice NI is working with Help the Aged Northern Ireland, Age Concern Northern Ireland and A2B to develop an Older Person Adviser Course (OPAC). The course will focus specifically on issues relating to older people and will be targeted at advisers and other groups who work with older people. The aim of the course is to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to advise older people on a variety of issues. The project is funded by A2B. It is intended that the course will be developed and piloted by early 2010.

Research was carried out as part of the needs analysis process of this course to help inform its content and delivery prior to development. The main aim of the research was to identify 6 topic areas for inclusion in the course based on the training needs of those working with older people and the welfare needs of older people themselves. Information to advise the accreditation pathway and shape of the course was also sought. The research was conducted during August and September of 2008.

### 1.2. Literature review:

#### 1.2.1. The Need for an Older Person Adviser Course

Northern Ireland has an ageing population which has resulted from a number of important achievements including better healthcare, nutrition, living conditions and working conditions. Currently those aged 65 and over make up 14% of the population which is expected to increase to 22% by 2031 (see table 1.1). Furthermore, around 33% of Northern Ireland's population is over 50 (HtANI 2008a).

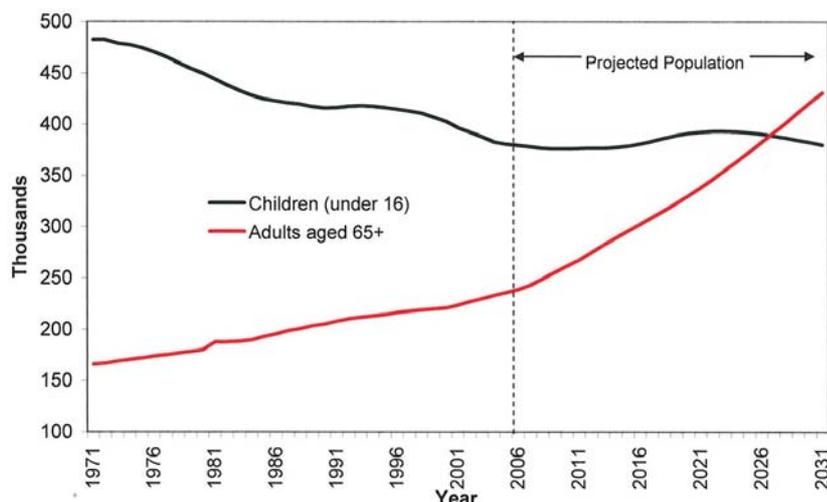
**Table 1.1: Projected Make Up of Population, 2006-2031:**

	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031
Children (Under 16)	22	21	20	20	20	19
Adult Population (16-64)	64	64	63	62	61	59
Elderly (65+)	14	15	16	18	19	22
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2007).

Within the population the number of people of pensionable age is expected to increase by 39% from 2006 to 2021, increasing from 284,000 to 396,000 (see figure 1.2). It is expected that by 2041 there will be twice as many people aged 65 and over as there are today (NISRA 2007). It is also important to note that Northern Ireland has a high proportion of people over the age of 80, with around 53,000 people over this age in 2007 (GAD cited by Age Concern NI, 2008). Furthermore, the number of people aged 85 and over is expected to quadruple in the next 40 years (HtANI, 2008a).

**Figure 1.1: Children under 16 and Adults Aged 65 and Over, Actual and Projected 1971-2031 (Non Zero Y Axis):**



Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2007).

It is important that the needs of the increasing numbers of older people in Northern Ireland are met and that older people are aware of their rights, responsibilities and entitlements regarding a variety of issues and services. While much excellent work is being achieved by various sectors, unfortunately many older people are being let down by services and/or society. This is true in a variety of areas such as health, housing, poverty, discrimination, abuse, safety, employment, care, and so on. In research reported by Help the Aged NI it was found that 64% of people agreed that older people in Northern Ireland are discriminated against because of their age (HtANI, 2008b). In healthcare for example, ageism is felt to be rife as older people do not always feel that they receive equal treatment in comparison to younger people, with symptoms often dismissed as old age. Currently legislation relating to age discrimination only exists with regard to employment, so in today's society older people can legally be discriminated against in various areas such as access to goods and services.

Many issues affecting older people have been exacerbated in the current economic climate. With the UK approaching a recession and rapid rises in food and energy prices as witnessed over the last year, more and more pensioners have been forced below the poverty line. In the last 12 months in Northern Ireland, 5,000 additional pensioners have been forced into poverty, with 28% of pensioners in Northern Ireland living in poverty (NI Assembly, 2008, HtANI, 2008b). Increasing numbers of older people are therefore getting into debt, and having to borrow money to pay for everyday living expenses. Added to this are increasing numbers of older people with mortgage debts, which they are struggling to pay. In 2006, 50% of pre-retirees aged 55 to 65 had an outstanding mortgage debt of over £60,000 (Scottish Widows cited by NI Assembly, 2008). In 2007 in the UK nationwide debt held by those in retirement totalled £57 billion (Scottish Widows, 2007). Not surprisingly it was reported in 2008 that older people are dying before their finances are sorted (Daily Telegraph, 2008).

It is also important to note that higher numbers of pensioners are living in housing poverty compared to other household groups, for example, in 2003, Age Concern NI reported that 8.2% of pensioners were living in dwellings categorised as unfit in comparison to 7.2% of all households. Despite these financial pressures and related poverty issues, it is estimated that in Northern Ireland at least £50 million in benefits for people of retirement age goes unclaimed every year, highlighting the need to increase benefit uptake (A2B, 2008a). Older people in Northern Ireland continue to be affected by a variety of other issues to those mentioned above. It was highlighted in a recent study, for example, that 3% of older people in Northern Ireland were being abused in their own home (HtANI, 2008a) indicating problems of elder abuse in NI. Other research found that in Northern Ireland, 23% of older people do not receive that help they need to leave their home (HtANI, 2008b), which emphasises difficulties in accessing services required such as community care.

As the above examples indicate, there are many areas and issues in which older people need help. As well as needing help when problems are encountered, older people also need information, advice and support in all aspects of life. Dunning (2005) points out that older people share many of the advice needs as other ages in society and while not a homogeneous group, may also need help with issues that relate from life changing events including retirement, a decline in physical/mental health, and changing housing needs, as well as wider aspects of citizenship such as employment, leisure, and life-long learning. It is important to stress that there are many groups and organisations within Northern Ireland who do exceptional work in trying to resolve issues facing older people and provide invaluable information, advice and support for older people in helping with their everyday needs. However many groups/organisations are overstretched and more work needs to be carried out in these areas.

Furthermore, awareness of the services available to older people as well as those which provide information, advice and support, needs to be increased for older people to access the services and help they require. Quinn et al (2003) point out that information, advice and advocacy services are fundamental in enabling older people to receive the services they require (cited by Dunning 2005). Therefore, an Older Person Adviser Course would be useful, for example, by enabling those working with older people to refer people to the services they need as well as helping to meet their advice needs. Providing older people with information, advice and advocacy regarding issues affecting them is key in promoting the independence, involvement and interests of older people, helping them to make choices, decisions, secure rights, and enabling them to be fully engaged in society (Dunning 2005). Therefore the Older Person Adviser Course should help to empower older people, giving them the awareness and understanding they need to remain in control of their lives and remain active citizens in society.

The Older Person Adviser Course is being developed in an attempt to help improve the situation for older people. Not only will the course raise awareness of the numerous issues facing older people, but it should also help to equip those working with older people with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet a range of advice needs. The course will cover a variety of topics, which it is hoped will enable workers to give information, advice and support (or know where these services can be sought) in a range of areas, both within and outside of their field of work. This will give workers a more holistic view and knowledge base of the issues affecting older people enabling more groups to provide, or direct to, advice, information and support

on these issues. By training those who work with older people, it is envisaged that in turn more older people will be made aware of the information and services available to them and of their rights and entitlements to these, which should help to improve their quality of life and help them to help themselves by exercising these rights and entitlements. By raising awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit, for example, it is hoped that poverty issues can in part be relieved.

Professional development is of the uppermost importance in any field of work, enabling workers to expand their knowledge and skills base and to keep abreast of current issues. However, it is particularly important where it could have such an important influence on a large proportion of society, which it is hoped the Older Person Adviser Course will achieve. It is hoped that the Older Person Adviser Course will help to improve (or refresh) the knowledge and skills of those working with older people and help to ensure that access to information and advice is available across Northern Ireland.

### **1.2.2. The Importance of Needs Analysis in Training Development:**

The needs analysis process is an extremely important part of the development of any training programme. The analysis phase allows for a number of important issues to be addressed, including identifying project goals, identifying gaps in training needs and finding out more about the specific needs of the target audience. The analysis phase also serves as a major role in the quality assurance process and helps to protect against mistakes being made (see Intulogy, 2008).

With regard to the Older Person Adviser Course the training needs of those working with older people will be assessed as well as the needs of older people themselves, as it is important that both groups benefit from the training developed. As discussed in Section 1.1, the results of the needs analysis research will be used to inform the shape and development of the Older Person Adviser Course such as its content and accreditation path. Therefore, this research is an extremely important part of the development of the Older Person Adviser Course.

## **2. Research Methods:**

A multi-method (qualitative and quantitative) and multi-source approach (those working with older people and older people themselves) was adopted to enable triangulation of data. Quantitative data was generated from a questionnaire, whilst qualitative techniques utilised a questionnaire and focus groups.

### **2.1. Questionnaire:**

A questionnaire was developed and delivered (on-line) to those who work with older people in an advisory capacity including advisers, community workers, health workers, carers, government agencies, MLAs, and city councils, to gain their views and experiences regarding course content including gaps in current training provision (see Appendix A). As well as distributing the questionnaire directly to groups and individuals who work with older people, a snowball sampling approach was adopted where participants were asked to distribute the questionnaire to their contacts who work in this capacity to ensure a wide audience was reached. The questionnaire was distributed (via e-mail) over a 2 week period to groups and individuals throughout Northern Ireland. A total of 131 responses were received.

### **2.2. Focus Groups:**

Focus groups were carried out with a random sample (network sample) of older people to gain the perspectives of older people themselves on the course content and advice issues generally (see Appendix B). A total of 2 focus groups (with between 6 to 8 participants) were carried out with older people from the Belfast and Greater Belfast area. These groups included both male and female participants of a mix of ages (from 60 to 80+) and communities. While ideally focus groups would have been carried out across the whole of Northern Ireland time and resources did not permit.

## **3. Results:**

### **3.1. Questionnaire Results:**

#### **3.1.1. Organisations:**

Responses were received from a variety of groups and organisations indicating interest in the course across a wide range of sectors and from individuals in various posts. This includes:

- Housing (e.g. Housing Rights Service, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Land and Property Services)
- Care (e.g. Carers Northern Ireland, Care homes (e.g. Tennant Street))
- Health (Rethink, Health and Social Care Trusts (e.g. Western), Health Action Zone, RNIB, NI Chest Heart Stroke North West, Disability Action, Deaf Association of NI)
- Benefits (The Benefit Shop, A2B)
- Education (e.g. University of the Third Age, Community Focus Learning)
- Community groups (e.g. Loughgeil Community Association, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, East Belfast Mission)
- Women's groups (e.g. Mosside Women's Group, Ballybeen Women's Centre)

- Advice centres (e.g. Citizens Advice (e.g. Causeway), DUP Advice Centre, Omagh Independent Advice Services, Victim Support)
- Age groups (e.g. Help the Aged NI, Age Concern NI, Age Sector Platform, Armagh Senior Citizens Forum)
- City councillors/MLAs (e.g. Ards Borough Council, Derry City Council, Belfast City Council, Banbridge District Council)
- Law and rights (e.g. Law Centre NI, Equality Commission, Consumer Council, NI Human Rights Consortium)

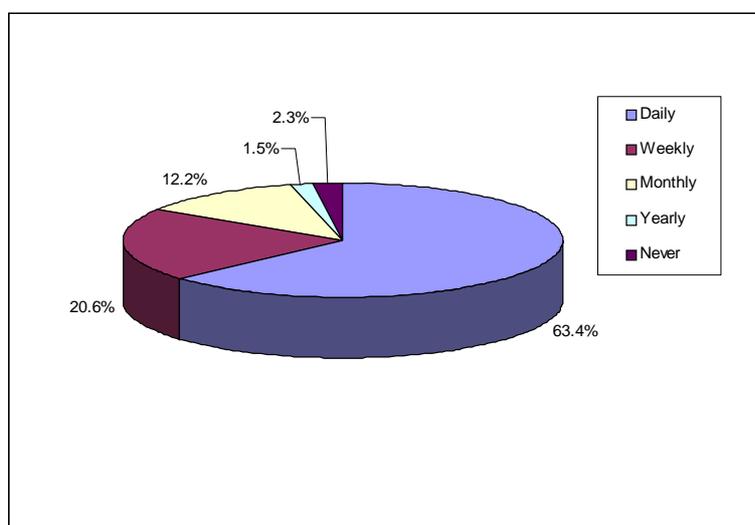
These groups are simply a snapshot of the vast array of organisations and sectors that participated in the research, indicating wide interest in the course.

The majority (63.4%) of respondents have daily contact with older people followed by weekly (20.6%) and monthly (12.2%) contact, indicating a high frequency of contact between the organisations and older people (see table & figure 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Frequency of contact with Older People**

Frequency of contact with older people	Response Count	Response %
Daily	83	63.4%
Weekly	27	20.6%
Monthly	16	12.2%
Yearly	2	1.5%
Never	3	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.1: Frequency of contact with Older People**



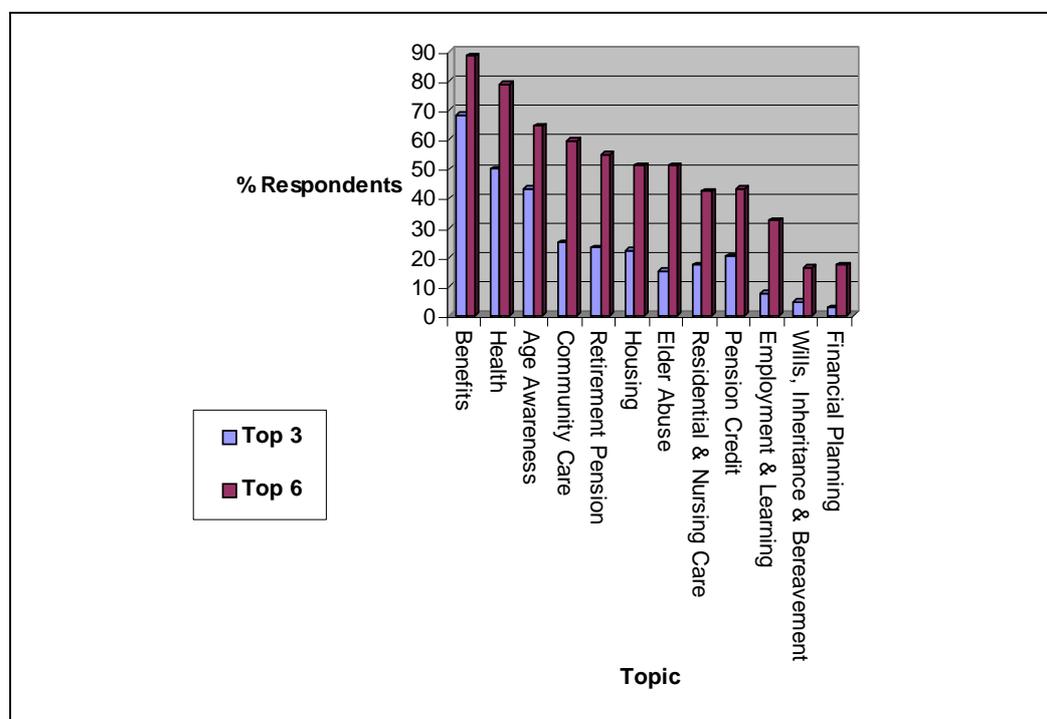
### 3.1.2. Content:

The questionnaire required respondents to rank 12 proposed topics in order of importance for inclusion in the course which was carried out by a total of 104 respondents. Based on the average ratings received the topics were ranked in the following order: (see final column).

**Table 3.2: Topic Ratings and Rankings Regarding Order of Importance for Inclusion in the Older Person Adviser Course**

Topic	Top 3 (i.e. rated between 1-3 out of 12)	Top 6 (i.e. rated between 1-6 out of 12)	Rating Average	Ranking 1-12 (Based on average rating)
An Introduction to Older People's (Welfare) Benefits	68.3%	88.5%	3.13	1
Health Rights and Services for Older People	50%	78.9%	4.18	2
Age Awareness and Advocacy with Older People	43.3%	64.5%	5.00	3
Community Care	25%	59.7%	5.88	4
Retirement Pension	23.1%	54.8%	6.30	5
Housing and Older People	22.2%	51.1%	6.49	6
Dealing with Elder Abuse	15.4%	51%	6.70	7
Residential and Nursing Care	17.3%	42.4%	7.12	8
Advanced Pension Credit Training	20.2%	43.2%	7.13	9
Employment and Learning Relating to Older People	7.6%	32.6%	8.09	10
Wills, Inheritance and Bereavement	4.8%	16.4%	8.77	11
Financial Planning for Retirement	2.9%	17.3%	9.22	12

**Figure 3.2: Percentage of Respondents who rated each Topic in their Top 3 and Top 6 (Out of 12)**



Therefore the topic rated as the most important for inclusion in the Older Person Adviser Course was 'An Introduction to Older People's Welfare Benefits', with 68.3% (n=71) of respondents rating this as 1 to 3 out of 12 (with 1 being the most important topic and 12 being the least important) (see figure 3.2). The other topics

rated in the top 6 most important topics for inclusion in the course were 'Health Rights and Services' (with 50% (n=52) rating this in the top 3), 'Age Awareness and Advocacy' (with 43.3% (n=45) rating this in the top 3), 'Community Care' (with 25% (n=26) rating this in the top 3), 'Retirement Pension' (with 23.1% (n=24) rating this in the top 3) and 'Housing and Older People' (with 22.2% (n=23) rating this in the top 3). It is important to note that while the remaining topics did not make it into the top 6, they too were rated highly (e.g. 51% of respondents related 'Dealing with Elder Abuse' in their top 6) indicating demand for all topic areas suggested.

A number of other topics were suggested for inclusion in the course including transport, home and personal safety, isolation, human and equal rights, healthy eating, social activities, IT, volunteering, communication with older people, mental health and money advice. Some of these suggested topics fit into the existing 12 topics, for example, it was envisaged that home safety will feature in the housing module, communication in the age awareness module, and mental health in the health module. Others of the suggested topics will be signposted to from the existing modules e.g. social activities would be signposted from health as this relates to a person's wellbeing, and transport can be signposted to from benefits (e.g. bus pass) and/or housing. Other issues e.g. human and equal rights will feature throughout the course as a whole, being incorporated in all topics.

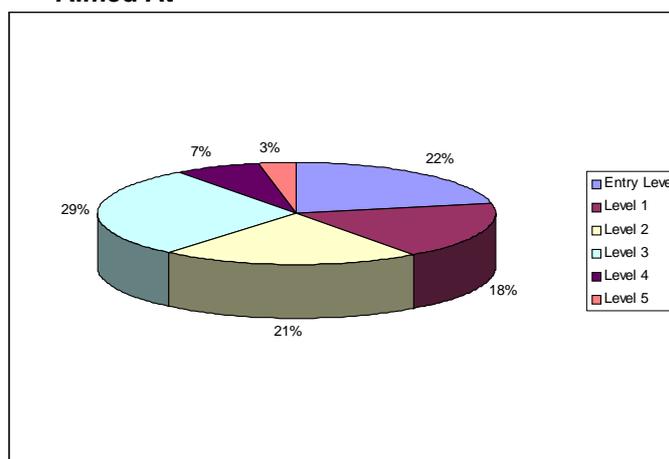
### 3.1.3. Accessibility and Needs:

The majority of respondents (29%, n=29) felt that the course should be aimed at Level 3 which is comparable to NVQ 3, A level, AS level and AVCE (see table & figure 3.3). However, a number of respondents thought the course should be aimed at Entry Level (22%, n=22, for progression to other learning programmes), Level 1 (18%, n=18, comparable to NVQ1, Foundation GNVQ & GCSE grades D-G) or Level 2 (21%, n=21, comparable to NVQ2, Intermediate GNVQ & GCSE grades A-C). Only a minority of respondents believed the course should be aimed at Levels 4 (7%, n=7, comparable to certificates of higher education) or 5 (3%, n=3, comparable to diploma of higher education & further education, foundation degrees & higher national diplomas). Therefore most respondents felt the course should be aimed at Level 3 or lower.

**Table 3.3: Level the Course should be Aimed At**

Level	Response Count	Response %
Entry Level	22	22%
Level 1	18	18%
Level 2	21	21%
Level 3	29	29%
Level 4	7	7%
Level 5	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.3: Level the Course should be Aimed At**



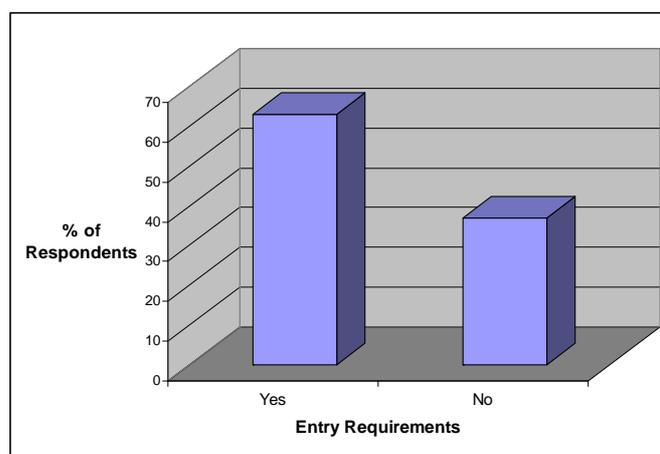
It is important to note that the above responses indicate future possibilities for the course at both a lower and higher level, indicating future sustainability of the course at both a specialist and entry level.

Most respondents (63%, n=36) felt that the course should not have entry requirements (see table & figure 3.4). Reasons given for not having entry requirements for the course related to issues of inclusion/exclusion, for example, one respondent commented “*Entry requirements will bar interested parties who have excellent interpersonal skills but are not academically qualified*” and another “*No because this would allow those working in communities in a voluntary capacity to have skills to assist the older generation within their community*”. Of those who believed the course should have entry requirements (37%, n=37) the majority felt a basic knowledge or awareness of the issues facing older people, experience of working with older people, or experience of giving advice would be sufficient, which is evident in comments such as “*Experience of working with older people*”, “*Awareness of the issues facing older people*”, and “*One year’s generalist advice experience in a social welfare context*”. A very small minority of respondents felt educational achievements such as GCSE’s, A-levels, or NVQs should form the basis of entry requirements for the course. Therefore, entry requirements were in the main not felt to be necessary for the course, and in instances where they were a basic level of knowledge, skills or experience in the subject area or with the subject group was regarded as adequate.

**Table 3.4: Entry Requirements for the Course**

Entry Requirements	Response Count	Response %
Yes	37	37%
No	63	63%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.4: Entry Requirements for the Course**

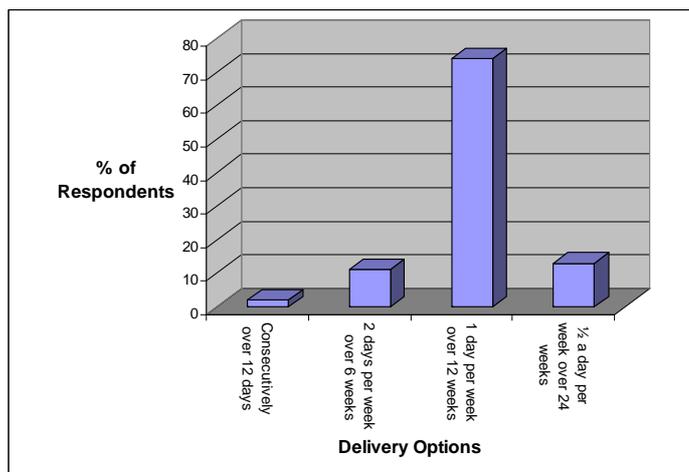


Assuming a 12 day face to face training course were developed (i.e. 2 days of face to face training per module) the vast majority (74%, n=74) of respondents felt the course should be delivered 1 day per week over a 12 week period (see table & figure 3.5). The next most favoured option (13%, n=13) was delivery ½ a day per week over a 24 week period, however this option was favoured by far fewer respondents. In relation to e-learning a duration of 11-15 weeks or 16-20 weeks to complete the course were jointly favoured (41%, n=41 each) (see table and figure 3.6). Therefore the longer course durations were favoured for e-learning. Some respondents (n=3) felt an even longer time frame (24 to 28 weeks) would be useful for an e-learning course, with family and work commitments given as a reason. However, it would also be beneficial to allow participants to complete in a shorted time frame (if desired by the learner) allowing for flexibility and for learners to complete at their desired pace.

**Table 3.5: Delivery of Face to Face Course**

Delivery Options	Response Count	Response %
Consecutively over 12 days	2	2%
2 days per week over 6 weeks	11	11%
1 day per week over 12 weeks	74	74%
½ a day per week over 24 weeks	13	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

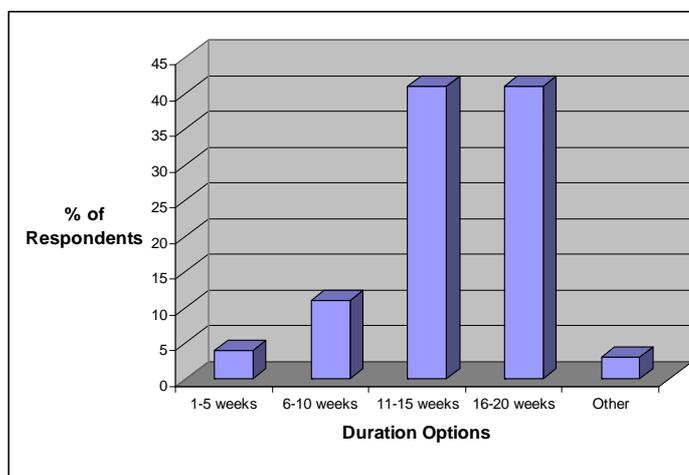
**Figure 3.5: Delivery of Face to Face Course**



**Table 3.6: Duration of E-learning Course**

Delivery Options	Response Count	Response %
1-5 weeks	4	4%
6-10 weeks	11	11%
11-15 weeks	41	41%
16-20 weeks	41	41%
Other	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.6: Duration of E-learning Course**

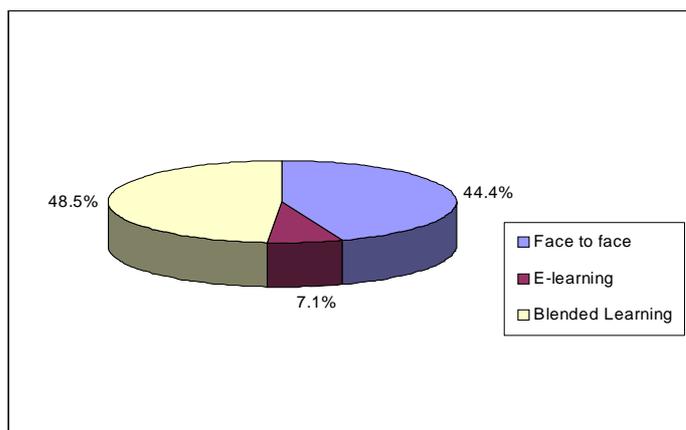


The preferred method of delivery for the Older Person Adviser Course was a blended learning approach (mixture of face to face and e-learning), with almost half (48.5%, n=48) of respondents favouring this approach (see table and figure 3.7). Face to face learning was also favoured by a large number of respondents (44%, n=44), and e-learning was the least favoured option (7.1%, n=7), with 1 respondent commenting “*Experiential learning is key and might lose its strength if e-learning or blended*”. However another respondent explained that e-learning would make the course more accessible, stating “*An e-learning course would be more accessible to my organisation*”. Therefore an e-learning option is also valuable.

**Table 3.7: Preferred Delivery Method**

Delivery Method	Response Count	Response %
Face to face	44	44.4%
E-learning	7	7.1%
Blended Learning	48	48.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>

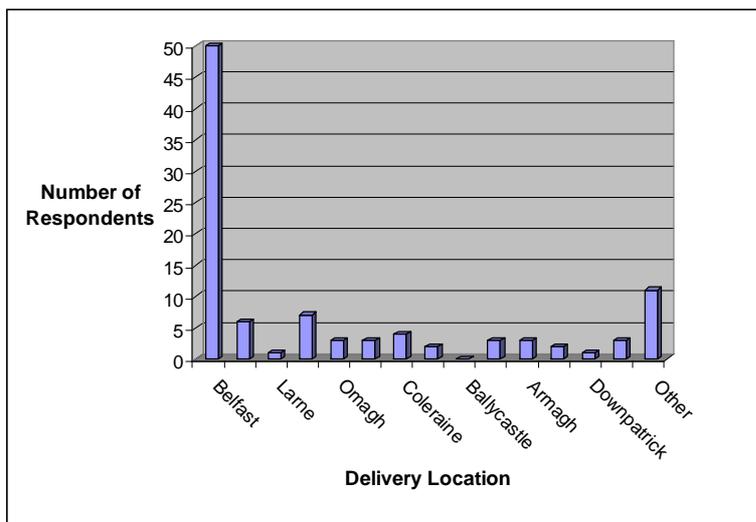
**Figure 3.7: Preferred Delivery Method**



The majority of respondents (50.5%, n=50) felt that it would be most beneficial to deliver the course in Belfast (see table 3.8 and figure 3.8). The second most popular location for delivery was Derry (7.1%, n=7), however this was significantly lower than for Belfast. Of those who responded ‘Other’ (11.1%, n=11), a number of these (n=6) felt Cookstown would be the most beneficial location due to its central location, for example “Cookstown – Mid Ulster, accessible from all points”. However, overall, Belfast was the preferred delivery location for the course.

**Table 3.8: Most Beneficial Delivery Location**      **Figure 3.8: Most Beneficial Delivery Location**

Delivery Locations	Response Count	Response %
Belfast	50	50.5%
Antrim	6	6.1%
Larne	1	1.0%
Derry	7	7.1%
Omagh	3	3.0%
Strabane	3	3.0%
Coleraine	4	4.0%
Limavady	2	2.0%
Ballycastle	0	0.0%
Eniskillen	3	3.0%
Armagh	3	3.0%
Portadown	2	2.0%
Downpatrick	1	1.0%
Newry	3	3.0%
Other	11	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>



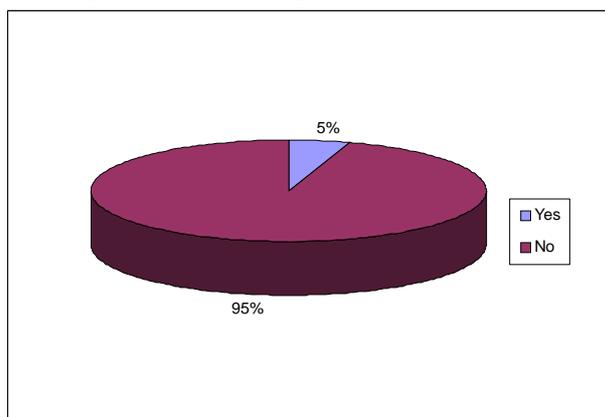
### 3.1.4. Duplication:

The vast majority of respondents (95%, n=94) did not know of any course/s or course modules relating to the Older Person Adviser Course that already exist which is extremely encouraging regarding duplication (see table 3.9 and figure 3.9). Only 5% (n=5) of respondents were aware of existing training, all of which related to individual topics, with no participants aware of an older person course in existence.

**Table 3.9: Existing Courses/Modules**

Duplication	Response Count	Response %
Yes	5	5%
No	94	95%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.9: Existing Courses/Modules**



Of those who were aware of existing training in this area all respondents referred to training offered by the Citizens Advice, the Law Centre NI, or Housing Rights Service. This included training on issues such as welfare rights, housing rights and community care. It is therefore important to ensure that the Older Person Adviser Course compliments existing training in these areas rather than duplicates courses that are already available. One respondent also reported that Age Concern NI offers internal age awareness training and felt that this could help to inform the Older Person Adviser Course age awareness module.

It is important to note here that the OPAC Steering Group were also aware of existing training in the areas of elder abuse and mental health which would need to be explored further to avoid duplication.

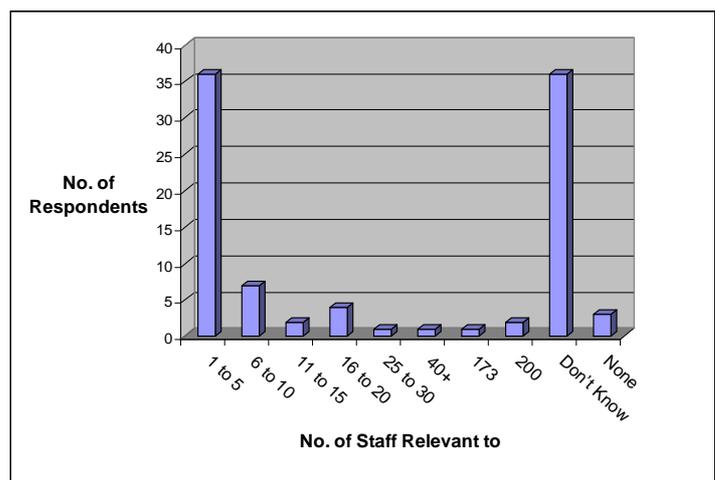
### 3.1.5. Interest & Awareness:

A large number of respondents (38.5%, n=36) were unsure of exactly how many volunteer or paid staff within their organisation the Older Person Adviser course would be relevant for, which is reflected in comments such as “Don’t know”, “Don’t know, but a large majority I would have thought”, and “All staff who are in regular contact with older persons”. Of those who placed a numerical value on the number of staff the course would be relevant for, the majority (38.5%, n=36) thought this would be between 1 and 5 members of staff or volunteers (see table & figure 3.10). However, a number of respondents felt the course would be relevant for significantly more staff/volunteers, with some (2%, n=2) regarding it as relevant to approximately 200 workers. Very few respondents reported that the course would not be suitable for their staff with reasons such as “None as we do not deal directly with the public” and “We would have a professional interest in helping to facilitate the course rather than take part” given to explain their response.

**Table 3.10: Number of Staff the OPAC is Relevant to:**

No. of Staff Relevant to	Response Count	Response %
1 to 5	36	38.5%
6 to 10	7	7.5%
11 to 15	2	2%
16 to 20	4	4.5%
25 to 30	1	1%
40+	1	1%
173	1	1%
200	2	2%
Don't Know	36	38.5%
None	3	4 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.10: Number of Staff the OPAC is Relevant to:**



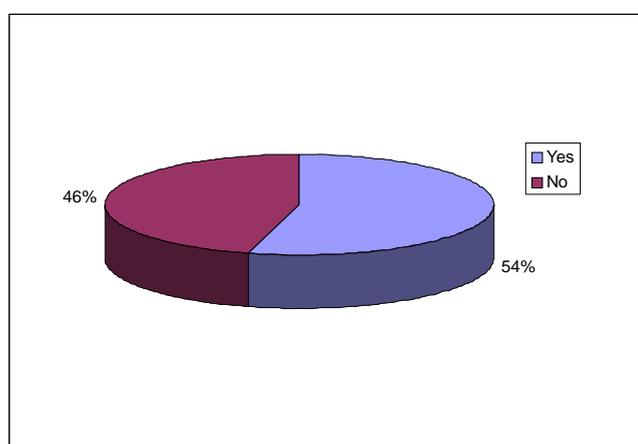
These figures are extremely encouraging and indicate a high level of relevance and potential interest in the course.

Over half (54%, n=52) of all respondents were able to recommend other groups/organisations alongside advisers, health professionals, carers and social security staff that may be interested in or may benefit from the Older Person Adviser Course (see table & figure 3.11). A number of respondents reported that the course would be beneficial for community groups and women’s centres, particularly those delivering services to older people. As one respondent explained *“Never under estimate the extent to which local community groups assist the older people within their community through a range of services and activities at a local level. Such a course would be relevant to them if they could access it and it did not have entry requirements etc, perhaps this is something different but many non paid volunteers fulfil a vital role in providing for the elderly in their communities”*.

**Table 3.11: Recommendations for Other Groups who May be Interested in/Benefit from the OPAC**

Recommendations of Interest Groups	Response Count	Response %
Yes	52	54%
No	44	46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.11: Recommendations for Other Groups who May be Interested in/Benefit from the OPAC**



Other groups that respondents felt the course would be useful to included housing providers, housing associations, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Land and Property Services, council officers/staff, voluntary organisations, senior citizens groups, leisure centres, capacity building workers, community transport staff, mental health advocacy groups, volunteer centres, further and higher education institutes, GP’s, utilities companies, PSNI, rural support networks, outreach workers, church groups, Social Services, retirement clubs, residents groups, lawyers, NICVA, Fold managers, MLAs (and their staff), USPCA, be-friender/support groups, private home care companies and Disability Action groups. One respondent felt that the course would be useful for *“any organisation that has contact with the elderly at all”*, and another raised that question of the course being available to older people themselves. One respondent also commented that *“It should be promoted in the commercial sector”*.

These responses are very encouraging and suggest that the course would be beneficial for and assist in the professional development of a wide range of audiences. It also indicates the potential of designing a course for older people themselves which is an important issue to consider.

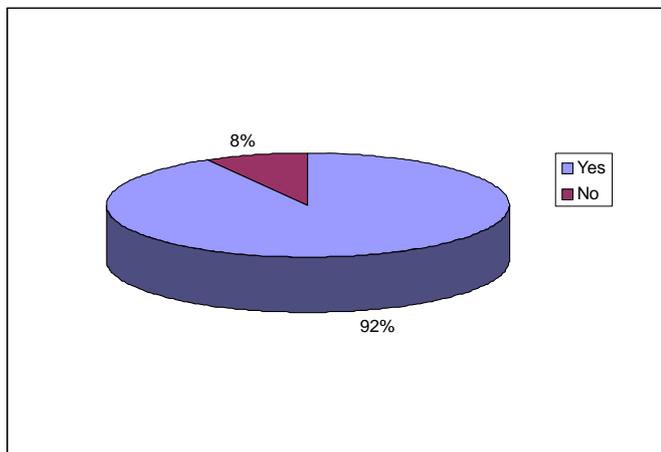
The vast majority of respondents (92%, n=88) were interested in being kept informed about the Older Person Adviser Course (e.g. it launch) indicating overwhelming interest in the course which is extremely positive and encouraging (see table and figure 3.12). Only 8% (n=8) of respondents were not interested in being kept

informed about the course, which is likely to be those who do not have contact or have very little (e.g. yearly) contact with older people (see table & figure 3.1).

**Table 3.12: Interest in Being Kept Informed About the Course:**

Interest in Being Informed About Course	Response Count	Response %
Yes	88	92%
No	8	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.12: Interest in Being Kept Informed About the Course:**

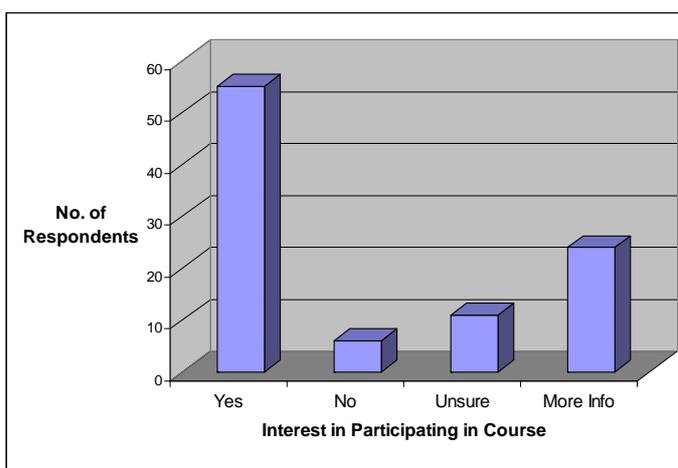


As well as being kept informed about the course well over half of respondents (57.3%, n=55) were interested in participating in or putting staff forward for the first roll out of the Older Person Adviser Course (see table & figure 3.13). A further 25% of respondents were potentially interested in participating in or putting staff forward for the course subject to further information, with another 11% uncertain about participating. Only 6.3% (n=6) of respondents were not interested in participating in or putting staff forward for the course which is remarkably few.

**Table 3.13: Interest in Participating in or Putting Staff Forward for Course:**

Interest in Participating in Course	Response Count	Response %
Yes	55	57.3%
No	6	6.3%
Unsure	11	11%
Don't know but would like more information	24	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.13: Interest in Participating in or Putting Staff Forward for Course:**

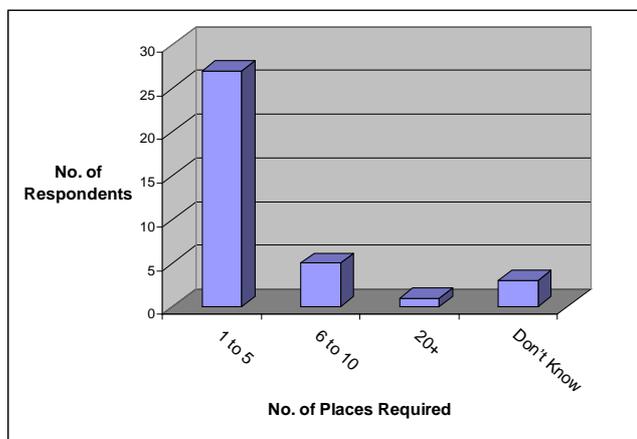


Of those participants (n=36) who clarified how many places they required for themselves and/or staff on the first roll out of the course, the majority (75%, n=27) required 1 to 5 places, with others requiring between 6 and 10 (14%, n=6) or 20+ (3%, n=1) places (see table & figure 3.14).

**Table 3.14: No. of Places Required on Course**

No. of Staff for Participation	Response Count	Response %
1 to 5	27	75%
6 to 10	5	14%
20+	1	3%
Don't Know	3	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 3.14: No. of Places Required on Course**



The overwhelming interest in course participation is tremendously encouraging demonstrating a large demand for the course and indicating future support and sustainability.

Further support for the course was indicated in the further comments section of the questionnaire, as demonstrated in comments such as *“A long time coming!!!”, “We think it is timely. Wish you luck!”*, *“Long overdue!”*, and *“This course is essential for those caring for or supporting older people especially those with learning difficulties, mental health problems and communication difficulties as they do not know in the majority of cases what they are or are not entitled to”*. As well as being extremely encouraging about the course, a number of respondents were eager to assist in the promotion of the course, again indicating their interest and positivity towards it, for example *“Marketing could be done through local community newsletters, ours is sent out monthly to 150 groups”* and *“We could help to market the course through our network - as we are currently working on the Age-well programme - covering Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon areas”*.

Some respondents advised on the teaching and learning methods of the course which can be taken into account in the development of training materials. This included using practical examples and experiential learning, for example, *“Use as many practical examples as possible and keep theory to a minimum”*, *“The ‘material’ from this course could be developed into a more accessible workshop/information session for practitioners like myself who support older people but do not give direct advice”*, and *“Lots of examples necessary from trainers to bring theory to life”*.

### 3.2. Focus Group Results:

The focus groups were extremely informative about the advice needs and issues facing older people. As with the questionnaire responses the focus group responses were very encouraging about the need for and use of an Older Person Adviser Course.

### **3.2.1. Issues Facing Older People:**

A variety of issues that face older people were raised. In the main these related to the following:

- Increased cost of living e.g. food, fuel prices, credit crunch.
- Transport e.g. lack of public transport, particularly in rural areas.
- Isolation e.g. loneliness, importance of getting out and about.
- Harassing mail/phone calls e.g. from sales companies.
- Technological advances and the digital divide e.g. penalised if don't book on-line and hidden charges on credit cards.
- Security, including home and personal security e.g. needing personal alarms and concerns about anti-social behaviour.
- Health and wellbeing.

A number of the issues raised above relate to the 12 topics suggested for inclusion in the OPAC. Increased cost of living such as rising fuel prices, for example, relates to issues such as benefit awareness, budgeting and financial management. However, some issues such as transport and loneliness are not explicitly linked, and should be incorporated into or signposted from topics included in the course. Loneliness, for example, can be included in the health module in relation to wellbeing. As well as signposting to further issues, some participants also highlight the importance of signposting to and raising awareness of different courses available to older people, including ICT training, as they commented that courses they had undertaken through WEA were extremely useful.

### **3.2.2. Areas Older People Need Advice About:**

The main area that participants felt older people need advice on was benefit awareness, particularly benefits that relate specifically to older people such as Pension Credit. Advice such as an explanation of the different benefits available and eligibility criteria for these was thought to be especially necessary. Participants were extremely vocal about the need for help with filling in benefit forms and the difficulty experienced in trying to achieve this. Benefits advice as well as other financial advice was felt to be very important given the current economic climate. As well as welfare benefits an awareness of grants and schemes available to older people was thought to be crucial as participants highlighted that these are often only discovered by word of mouth which is extremely inadequate. Information about the grants/schemes available (e.g. energy saving schemes that pay for insulation, home repairs etc.), where to get help and eligibility criteria were thought to be essential.

Care was another area that was thought to be extremely important for older people to be able to access advice on. This included such issues as residential care choices available to older people, costs of residential care, and community care available for those coming out of hospital e.g. facilities available such as assistive technologies (e.g. stair lifts, bath supports).

Other areas participants thought older people need advice on include transport schemes operating in each council area and how to block unwanted telephone calls.

### **3.2.3. Advice Issues:**

With regard to accessing advice, participants explained that their experience of having an adviser come out to a community group to give both group and individual advice was very useful. However, they sometimes found telephone advice less useful. Some participants commented that in their experience some government organisations offered poor telephone advice, and gave examples such as being passed around to numerous people and not having their original questions answered as reasons for this. CAB, the independent advice sector and social services were thought by participants to offer more productive advice.

Participants also reported that being able to get all their questions answered and advice needs met '*under one roof*' i.e. that someone can advise on a variety of issues would be incredibly useful, especially for older people who have transport or mobility difficulties. The OPAC may therefore be useful as those who complete the course should be able to advise on a variety of issues and subject areas affecting older people. Also, if the OPAC is adapted for direct delivery to older people themselves, it could potentially meet basic advice needs of this group '*under one roof*'.

### **3.2.4. Topics:**

#### **a) Age Awareness and Advocacy:**

Participants felt that age awareness and communication with older people were important areas that those working with older people should be trained in. They believed that experience and training were required in a variety of aspects regarding working with older people, including a better understanding of the issues facing older people, training to be more sensitive to the needs and individual situations (e.g. bereavement) of older people, and learning how to communicate better with older people. A minority of respondents gave reasons such as being talked down to by health professionals, or not being listened to by those advocating on their behalf, to explain why age awareness and communication are required. Some participants also thought age awareness was important to change stereotypical attitudes that younger people have about older people as well as older people about younger people.

#### **b) Welfare Benefits/Retirement Pension/Pension Credits:**

As previously discussed (section 3.2.2), welfare benefits and payments is an area that participants believe is essential for older people to be advised about. Participants identified three main areas where older people need help, which were awareness of benefits, knowledge of entitlements and help with the application process. Regarding access to benefits participants explained that older people often don't know what benefits exist and usually only find out about benefits by word of mouth. Therefore, their awareness of benefits needs to be improved. Some participants had participated in the A2B benefit calculator training, which they felt was beneficial, but explained that many older people were not aware of this tool, so again awareness should be improved. It is important to note that at the time this research was conducted the A2B benefit calculator tool had not yet been launched, so awareness may increase following its launch.

Regarding benefit entitlement participants again felt a lack of confidence and knowledge in this area, particularly around retirement benefits such as Pension Credit. Furthermore, in some instances participants

were aware of entitlements to benefits such as Pension Credit, but were not aware of the value of claiming if the amounts were small. Therefore, in cases where entitlements are low, older people may need to be made aware of the importance of claiming these as passports to other benefits such as dental care.

The benefit application process was thought to be complicated and off putting for numerous reasons including the length of forms, complexity of forms, and invasiveness of forms. Some participants for example reported that the forms require too much personal information e.g. about finances, which they felt puts people off applying. Others thought the wording on forms was confusing and many felt the forms were trying to catch them out, which again was off-putting. Therefore, participants felt it would be useful to receive advice about the application process, including awareness of advice services that help with form filling, and help with the wording of application forms (particularly Disability Living Allowance/Attendance Allowance forms). Some participants thought it would be useful to be able to sit with an adviser and apply for everything in one go so that the process is not as invasive.

The above findings regarding welfare benefits are consistent with those reported in research conducted by A2B about benefit uptake of older people (A2B, 2008b), and highlight the importance of advisers (as well as older people themselves) being aware of a range of benefit issues, which will need to be incorporated into the OPAC.

#### **c) Elder Abuse:**

In one focus group all participants felt that elder abuse was an essential topic, while in the other half felt it was important. In the latter group some felt it would not be a top priority for Northern Ireland, but did state that this could be a result of their lack of awareness about the topic. Some participants suggested that this topic be incorporated into another unit e.g. Age Awareness. However, overall it was thought to be an important issue for inclusion in the course and for those in need to be able to seek help and support on.

#### **d) Employment and Learning:**

Participants reported that being prepared for retirement is extremely important, commenting that once a person stops working there is suddenly no structure to their day. They felt older people would benefit from being encouraged to prepare for retirement and from being given advice on how to do this. As well as this, issues such as the increased cost of evening classes were raised. Participants felt that the increased cost of classes and reduction in subsidies for older people has hindered them for signing up to courses. They also thought that older people would benefit from signposting to free courses/evening classes e.g. those run by the WEA.

#### **e) Wills, Inheritance and Bereavement:**

Overall, wills, inheritance and bereavement was thought to be an important topic area, particularly in the current economic climate. However, some participants felt that while general advice in this area would be useful, if they needed specialist advice they would be more likely to approach legal or financial advisers than an advice centre. Participants highlighted a variety of areas where advice and support in this area would be useful. Advice on funeral plans and funeral charges was thought to be beneficial, for example, advice on

those that charge VAT and those that don't. Advice on inheritance tax and how best to avoid this was considered essential as was advice on bereavement e.g. benefit entitlements after bereavement. One participant for example highlighted a case where after a person's spouse died they had received some benefit overpayments from the spouse's benefits, but were not able to repay these due to frozen assets. Therefore, advice on how to deal with and resolve situations such as this were considered essential.

#### **f) Health:**

Health was regarded as an extremely important topic area with a number of aspects thought to be useful for older people to receive advice on. Some participants expressed concern about health services and healthcare choices available to them, and felt that they lacked knowledge about these. Therefore, knowledge about health rights and choices as well as information about healthcare services available to them would be useful. Participants felt that information about health benefits and entitlements e.g. information about prescriptions and hearing aids would be useful. Furthermore, with regard to welfare benefits and health, participants felt older people require information about how to handle benefits (e.g. benefit entitlements) when they go into hospital. A number of participant raised concerns about benefits stopping if they go into hospital, which they felt was both wrong and worrying, as they explained that older people continue to have to meet mortgage repayments while in hospital. Therefore, advice about benefit rules and hospital, as well as how to cope if benefits cease would be useful.

Other areas of advice raised include advice on assistive aids such as aids available and entitlements to these. Participants felt that all older people should be entitled to the facilities they need, regardless of wealth etc. Also, some participants reported that as older people are not aware of the services available, they are not aware of what they are missing out on, therefore, increased knowledge of services and entitlements is essential to ensure all receive their entitlements. As well as being aware of healthcare rights, one participant highlighted the importance of being aware of rights such as the right to live. They felt that doctors operate age discrimination by refusing cardiac arrest and resuscitation after a certain age. Therefore awareness of various healthcare rights was thought to be essential.

Participants thought it would be useful for advisers to be aware of different health conditions that affect older people such as dementia and eyesight deterioration when advising clients, as well as being able to advise on how to get help to cope with such difficulties. It is envisaged that this will sit partly in the age awareness module to enable advisers to be aware of various conditions and adapt communication skills accordingly.

#### **g) Community Care:**

Participants felt older people would benefit greatly from more advice in the area of community care, as discussed in section 3.2.2. Services available and entitlements to services was one area that participants wanted advice on, for example, entitlements to home help and assistive aids. As well as wanting more information on the types of services available, participants wanted information on how to get more help, for example, one participant got home help for 15 minutes per week and wanted advice on how to increase their entitlement. Also, while services such as meals on wheels were thought to be vital, participants felt these services should take account of personal circumstances of older people, for example, one participant raised

the point that someone with dementia may forget to defrost the meal. This relates to age awareness and being aware of differing needs of older people, which again indicates the importance of raising awareness of those working with older people. Participants also felt older people would benefit from being signposted to other professionals e.g. occupational therapists, for more specialist care needs and services. Therefore, advisers should be aware of where older people can access care services based upon their needs. Furthermore, in relation to services, participants felt advice and help on how to deal with poor care services would be useful.

While some participants were aware of community care assessments, they felt more information on what these involve and how the assessment impacts on entitlements are required. Information for older people who are carers e.g. looking after family members, was also felt to be important, particularly in relation to benefits and services/benefits available to them, such as Carers Allowance and respite care.

Participants were particularly concerned about isolation and older people, and the need for community care in isolated areas. Some participants for example felt that advisers should be doing more home visits, particularly for isolated and vulnerable people to meet care needs. In cases where advisers are unable to conduct home visits, participants argued that they should be able to inform clients about schemes who visit people in their own home. Home visits were thought to be useful not only in relation to care needs, but also for befriending services to reduce loneliness and isolation. Participants also raised the point (although not in relation to care) that being aware of community groups that exist, particularly men's groups for older men, was important to help with loneliness and isolation.

#### **h) Residential Care:**

As with community care, participants were extremely passionate about residential care needs and services. In the main this related to choice, costs, services, standards and availability. Participants felt that older people need advice on the care options available to them and if/when they should start to consider residential care, including such things as qualifying criteria for care homes, waiting lists and the types of care homes available. Information on the facilities and services offered by homes, the types of services they should look out for, and questions to ask when considering a home were thought to be useful. Some participants were particularly concerned about the activities and facilities available in homes and wanted advice on how to stay mentally and physically active in residential care.

As well as services available, participants were concerned about standards of service. They felt older people should have access to information about quality assurance, such as the standards homes have to meet, and rating scales of where individual homes are placed. Advice on the complaints procedures and how to deal with poor quality care homes/carers was thought to be important, as was advice on how to lobby about poor quality residential care.

With regard to cost, participants felt advice on how to pay for care homes and about benefits/subsidies available, as well as entitlements to these, would be useful. Concern was also expressed by participants about the impacts that going into residential care would have on them, such as losing their home to pay for

care. Participants felt very strongly that losing their home was unfair and wanted clarity and advice regarding legislation on this issue and information about options available to those who own their own home.

#### **i) Housing:**

Participants felt older people would benefit from information about housing choices available to them, such as sheltered housing and local authority housing. With regard to sheltered housing participants felt information about the location of sheltered housing in Northern Ireland (i.e. where to find it), the types of sheltered housing accommodation available, and the standard of accommodation available would be useful. For local authority/social housing, participants were concerned about having to leave social housing, e.g. to go into care, and the impact that this would have in relation to moving away from family. This again highlights the need for more information about housing choice.

Other issues regarding housing included home security and safety in the home, advice on consumer issues such as house insurance, advice on home repairs schemes and advice on how to save energy/stay warm. Participants felt information about the types of repair schemes available, including free repairs, subsidised repairs or cheap repairs would be useful, as well as their entitlement to these. The issue of fuel poverty was particularly prevalent, with participants arguing that older people should be made more aware of energy saving devices/schemes/services/benefits available such as the EAGA Warm Homes scheme. Again they felt this information needed to focus on availability and entitlement.

#### **j) Financial Planning for Retirement:**

In contrast to the questionnaire results, a number of focus group participants felt financial planning for retirement was an important topic for inclusion in the course. Numerous participants raised concerns about financial issues that they felt older people would benefit from advice on, e.g. concerns about inheritance for their family. Although some felt they would approach a financial adviser for more complex issues ( as noted in section 3.2.4.e), they believed advice groups could provide a variety of useful advice and information, as well as signposting them to financial advisers. Advice on how to protect savings and an explanation of the different types of savings accounts and investments was thought to be useful, as participants felt that banks are not safe in the current economic climate.

Participants were particularly concerned about inheritance tax and felt that making family members pay tax on inheritance was unjust as tax had already been paid on earnings, savings and property. Therefore, participants felt that advice about inheritance tax e.g. on gifts and property, and information about lobbying with regard to inheritance tax would be useful. Another area of interest to older people was equity release. Participants wanted to know such things as whether they can continue living in a house under an equity release scheme, if so for how long, and what happens if they are taken into care/hospital. Therefore, information on different equity release plans was thought to be important. Participants also wanted information about funeral plans and advice about how to pay for funerals.

### **3.2.5. Missed Topics:**

Participants felt that all topics were well covered and that none were missing from the proposed list (see table 3.15). However, they did feel that there was overlap between some topics, and certain topics may sit well together, for example, financial planning and wills, inheritance and bereavement were thought to overlap in places.

### **3.2.6. Topics for Inclusion in the course:**

Those in the first focus group felt that the topics that were essential for inclusion in the Older Person Adviser Course were Age Awareness, Benefits, Retirement Pension, Pension Credit, Elder Abuse, Health, Housing, Community Care and Residential Care. The remaining topics were thought to be desirable for inclusion in the course. These included Employment & Learning, Wills, Inheritance & Bereavement, and Financial Planning.

Participants in the second focus group individually rated the top 6 topics that they felt should be included in the OPAC, i.e. the top 6 most important topics for inclusion. It is important to note that participants allocated choices individually, and not through discussions with other group members. All participants (100%, n=6) felt 'An Introduction to Welfare Benefits' and 'Health Rights and Services for Older People' should be included in the course. Almost all participants (n=5, 83%) thought 'Housing and Older People' and 'Age Awareness and Advocacy' should be included. Half of the participants (n=3, 50%) rated 'Dealing with Elder Abuse', 'Advanced Pension Credit Training' and 'Will, Inheritance and Bereavement', in their top 6, and 1/3 (33%, n=2) rated 'Community Care'. There was less agreement for the remaining topics with between 0% and 17% of participants rating them in their top 6 (see table 3.15). This included 'Retirement Pension' (17%, n=1), 'Residential and Nursing Care' (17%, n=1), 'Financial Planning for Retirement' (17%, n=1) and 'Employment and Learning Relating to Older People' (0%). Interestingly, 'Retirement Pension' and 'Residential and Nursing Care' were rated as essential by the other focus group and only scored 17% here. However, one participant commented that choosing only 6 topics for inclusion was very difficult as they felt that all topics were important, which could explain this. Also, comments given by this group indicated that they too felt these topics were essential for inclusion.

**Table 3.15: Number of Participants who Rated Topics in their Top 6 (Focus Group 2)**

Topic	No. of participants who rated the topic in their top 6 (out of 6)	% of participants who rated the topic in their top 6 (out of 6)
An Introduction to Older People's (Welfare) Benefits	6	100%
Health Rights and Services for Older People	6	100%
Age Awareness and Advocacy with Older People	5	83%
Community Care	2	33%
Retirement Pension	1	17%
Housing and Older People	5	83%
Dealing with Elder Abuse	3	50%
Residential and Nursing Care	1	17%
Advanced Pension Credit Training	3	50%
Employment and Learning Relating to Older People	0	0%
Wills, Inheritance and Bereavement	3	50%
Financial Planning for Retirement	1	17%

Overall, the topics regarded as the most important for inclusion in the course by older people themselves were very similar to those selected by those working with older people (questionnaire responses), for example, Benefits, Health, Housing, Community Care, Age Awareness and Retirement Pension were rated as essential by the majority of both. However, a number of focus group participants rated Pension Credit as more important for inclusion in the course than Retirement Pension. Also, Wills, Inheritance & Bereavement, Elder Abuse and Residential & Nursing Care were thought to be important topics for inclusion in the course by most focus group participants, and less so by questionnaire respondents.

### **3.2.7. Other Organisation who may benefit from OPAC:**

As well as advisers, health professionals, carers and social security staff, participants felt the Older Person Adviser Course would be of benefit to all those who are in direct contact with older people on a daily basis. Participants thought that workers in daily contact with older people may benefit from the full training course, while those in less frequent contact with older people may benefit from some of the training. Other groups that participants thought may benefit from undertaking the course included staff in residential settings and union workers.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations:**

##### **4.1. Conclusion:**

Overall the questionnaire and focus group results were very similar, indicating similar ideas about course content from those working with older people as well as older people themselves. Responses from both audiences were extremely informative and have provided invaluable information about the content and structure of the course, as well as informing accreditation options. In addition to covering the needs of advisers, a wealth of information was provided by focus group participants to enable the needs of older people to be incorporated into course. This will be extremely useful for informing not only the choice of topics to be included, but also the content of those topics themselves. Therefore the aims of the research were more than met.

##### **4.2. Recommendations:**

From the questionnaire and focus group responses the following recommendations have been formed:

i. The 6 topics for inclusion in the OPAC should be:

- An Introduction to Older People's (Welfare) Benefits
- Health Rights and Services for Older People
- Age Awareness and Advocacy with Older People
- Community Care (Include Residential Care)
- Retirement Pension (Include Pension Credit)
- Housing and Older People

ii. As well as addressing Pension Credit in the benefits module, the unit on retirement pension should also include some (more detailed) information/activities on Pension Credit to meet this demand from older people themselves. The unit on community care should include information on residential care again to meet the needs of and demand from older people.

iii. Specific course content of each of the modules should be informed by focus group results and suggestions. For example, the age awareness module could include information about communicating with older people with differing needs, and the benefits or retirement pension module could include information on passport benefits.

iv. The course should aim to include other modules in the future, particularly Elder Abuse, Residential & Nursing Care, Advanced Pension Credit Training, and Wills, Inheritance and Bereavement, as these were also in high demand.

v. Topics such as transport, isolation, leisure activities and healthy eating should be incorporated where possible into appropriate modules or should be signposted to from appropriate modules.

vi. The course should be aimed at Level 3, which is comparable to NVQ 3, A-level, AS level and AVCE.

vii. In the future the course should be developed at both lower and higher levels to meet demand. Therefore, it is recommended that the course be developed at both entry and specialist levels, which would allow for progression of learning.

viii. The course should not have entry requirements to avoid excluding potential audiences.

ix. The course should offer both a face-to-face and e-learning option for delivery to ensure accessibility to all.

x. The face to face course should be delivered 1 day per week over a 12 week period.

xi. The e-learning course should allow participants to complete within a 20 week period. However, flexibility should be included to allow those who desire to complete earlier, enabling learners to complete at their own pace (within the 20 week period).

xii. Initially the face to face course should be delivered in Belfast. However, other locations such as Cookstown should be considered following the pilot.

xiii. The OPAC should compliment existing training courses rather than duplicate training. Investigations into existing courses, course content, and accessibility will need to be carried out, particularly in the areas identified such as age awareness and mental health.

xiv. The course should be marketed as widely as possible and to any group/organisation that works with older people, including community groups, housing providers, housing associations, council officers/staff, voluntary organisations, senior citizens groups, community transport staff, mental health advocacy groups, volunteer centres, further and higher education institutes, GPs, utility companies, PSNI, rural support networks, outreach workers, church groups, Social Services, retirement clubs, residents groups, lawyers, NICVA, Fold managers, MLAs (and their staff), be-friender/support groups, private home care companies and disability organisations.

xv. Offers by participants to market the course should be investigated and acted upon.

xvi. In the future the course should be adapted to be delivered to older people themselves, giving them direct advice on a variety of issues. If a course such as this is developed, delivery and/or marketing through community groups should be considered.

xvii. The course should be adapted and developed into shorter training programmes/workshops for those who work with older people but do not require the whole course.

xviii. The OPAC should aim for a high profile launch due to the vast amount of interest in the course. Questionnaire and where possible research participants should be informed of its launch.

xix. Developments of the course should be publicised e.g. in the Advice NI Newsletter and through Advice Link to keep potential audiences aware of advances.

xx. The learning methods used in the course should include the use of practical activities and draw upon the learner's experience.

#### **4.3. Further Research:**

It is recommended that research continues to be conducted during the lifecycle of this project. This should include both formative and summative evaluations of the course and its teaching and learning materials. Formative evaluations should take place at various stages, including during the developmental and implementation phases.

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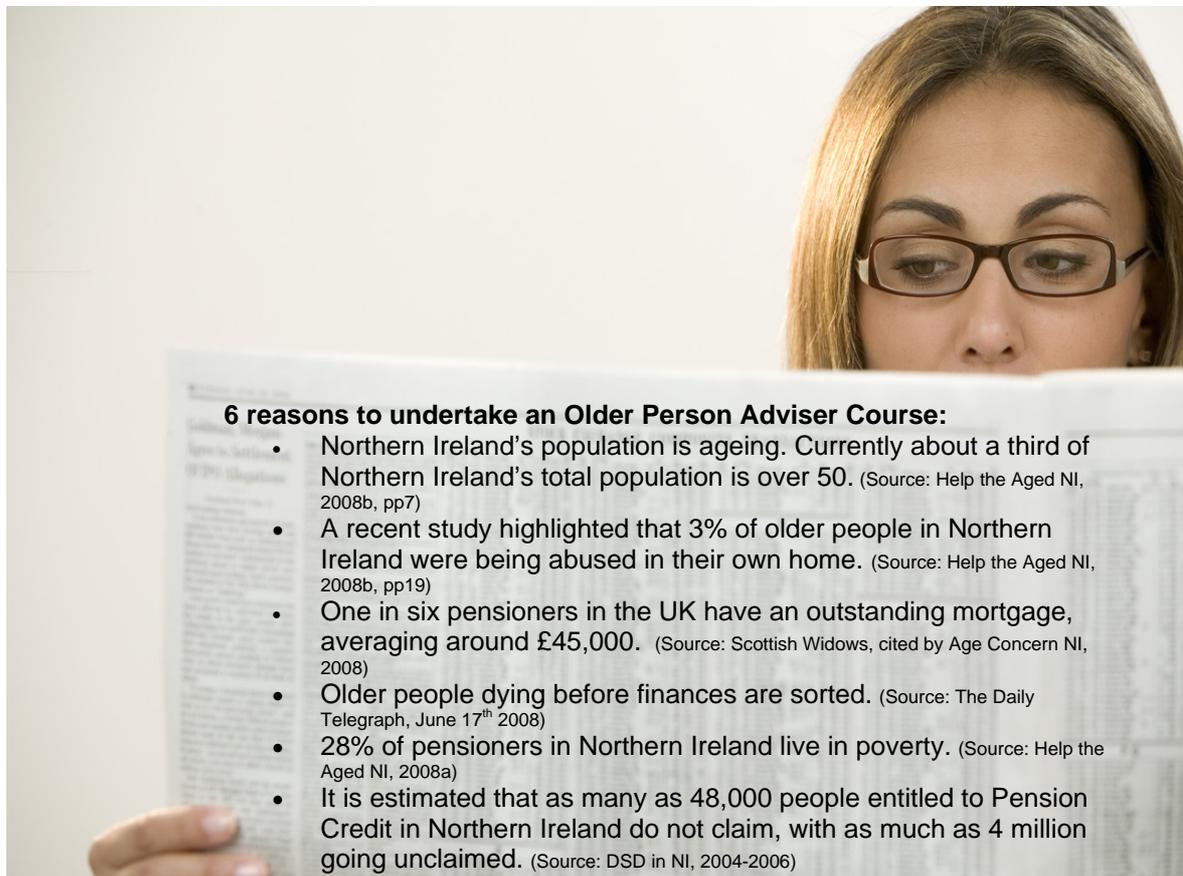
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## APPENDICIES

# Older Person Adviser Course (OPAC) Questionnaire

Northern Ireland has an ageing population. Is your organisation able to respond to the advice needs of older people? An Older Person Adviser Course could help.



**Please complete this questionnaire and help us to help you.**



All completed responses received by the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2008 will be entered into a prize draw with the chance of winning a £50 shopping voucher in appreciation of your time and help.

## **Introduction:**

Advice NI are currently developing an Older Person Adviser Course (OPAC) in conjunction with A2B (Access to Benefits), Age Concern NI, and Help the Aged NI. The course will focus specifically on issues relating to older people and will be targeted at advisers and other groups who work with older people. We want to be certain that the course covers the most relevant, up-to-date, and appropriate topics and that it meets gaps in current training provision. We also want to ensure that OPAC is accessible to all groups that may benefit from participating.

To help us produce an OPAC that is both useful and used, we would very much appreciate it if you could complete the following questionnaire.

Your views and experience are very important to us and will help us to inform the OPAC. Please complete and submit the questionnaire as soon as possible and before the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2008.

Thank you in anticipation for you time and help, it is greatly appreciated.

Regards

Advice NI

## **Overview: Organisation Details:**

**0.1. Please complete the table below: (Please ensure contact details are correct for entry into the prize draw).**

<b><u>Contact Name:</u></b>	<b><u>Organisation/Group:</u></b>	<b><u>Contact Details:</u></b>
		E-mail:
		Phone:

**0.2. Please indicate the frequency of contact your organisation/group has with older people.**

Daily
  Weekly
  Monthly
  Yearly
  Never

## **Section 1: Content:**

**1.1 Please rank the following 12 topics in order of importance for inclusion in the Older Person Adviser Course. 1 refers to the most important topic for inclusion in the course and 12 the least important. Please use a different number (1-12) for each topic.**

Topic	Order of Importance (i.e. 1-12)
Age Awareness and Advocacy with Older People	
An Introduction to Older People's (Welfare) Benefits	
Retirement Pension	
Advanced Pension Credit Training	
Dealing with Elder Abuse	
Employment and Learning Relating to Older People	
Wills, Inheritance and Bereavement	
Health Rights and Services for Older People	
Community Care	
Residential and Nursing Care	
Housing and Older People	
Financial Planning for Retirement	

**1.2 Please list any other topics that you think should be included in the Older Person Adviser Course and state whether you think these topics are essential or desirable for inclusion:**

Topic	Essential or Desirable

## **Section 2: Accessibility and Needs:**

**2.1. What level do you think the course should be aimed at?**

- Entry Level**  
 (For progression to other learning programmes)
- Level 1**  
 (Comparable to NVQ1, Foundation GNVQ & GCSE grades D-G)
- Level 2**  
 (Comparable to NVQ2, Intermediate GNVQ & GCSE grades A\*-C)
- Level 3**  
 (Comparable to NVQ3, A Level, AS Level & AVCE)
- Level 4**  
 (Comparable to certificates of higher education)
- Level 5**  
 (Comparable to diplomas of higher education & further education, foundation degrees, & higher national diplomas)

**2.2. Do you think the course should have entry requirements?**

- Yes                       No

**If yes, what do you think they should be?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2.3. Assuming a 12 day face to face course were developed (i.e. 2 days of face to face training per module), over what duration do you think the course should be delivered?** (Please Note: The 12 days of training does not take account of time required to complete assignments/assessments which will need to be submitted between modules and/or at the end of the course).

- Delivered consecutively over 12 days  
 Delivered 2 days a week over 6 weeks  
 Delivered 1 day a week over 12 weeks  
 Delivered ½ a day per week over 24 weeks

**2.4. Assuming an e-learning course were developed that required 70 hours of training (equivalent to 12 days of face to face training), as well as time to complete assignments/assessments, over what duration do you think the course should be completed?**

- 1-5 Weeks       6-10 Weeks       11-15 Weeks       16-20 Weeks       Other:

**If other, please state:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2.5. If you were to undertake the Older Person Adviser Course which method of delivery would you prefer?**

- Face to face learning     
  E-learning     
  Blended learning (a mixture of face to face and e-learning)

**2.6. Please select where you think it would be most beneficial to deliver the course:**

- Belfast     Derry       Coleraine     Eniskillen     Downpatrick  
 Antrim     Omagh     Limavady     Armagh       Newry  
 Larne       Strabane     Ballycastle     Portadown     Other

If other, please state: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 3: Duplication:**

**3.1. Do you know of any course/s or course modules of this type (Older Persons Adviser Course) that already exist/s?**

- Yes                       No

If yes, please give details: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 4: Interest and Awareness:**

**4.1. How many volunteer or paid staff in your organisation would this course be relevant for?**

- Number of staff: \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

**4.2. It is intended to raise awareness of the OPAC amongst advisers, health professionals, carers and social security staff. Do you think there are any other groups/organisations that may be interested in or may benefit from participating in the OPAC?**

- Yes                       No

If yes, which groups/organisations? Please state: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**4.3. Are you interested in being kept informed about the Older Person Adviser Course (OPAC) e.g. its launch?**

- Yes                       No

**4.4. Would you be interested in participating in or putting staff forward for the first roll out of the Older Person Adviser Course? Please note that it is likely that the course will be delivered free of charge to the first phase of participants.**

Yes       No       Unsure       Don't know would like more information

If yes, how many places? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Section 5: Further Comments:**

**5.1: Please add any further comments that you feel would be useful in relation to the development, delivery and marketing of an Older Person Adviser Course.**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**

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## Appendix B

### Older Person Adviser Course (OPAC) Focus Group Questions

**Overview:**

The focus groups are to take place with older people themselves to gain their perspective on the older person adviser course and to advise on aspects such as course content.

The following information is intended as guidance only, to help facilitate discussion.

**Focus Group Introduction:**

Advice NI are currently developing an Older Person Adviser Course (OPAC) in conjunction with A2B (Access to Benefits), Age Concern NI, and Help the Aged NI. The course will focus specifically on issues relating to older people and will be targeted at advisers and other groups who work with older people.

We want to be certain that the course covers the most relevant, up-to-date, and appropriate topics in relation to older people, and to ensure that the topics chosen meet the needs of older people on the ground.

**Focus Group Questions:**

1. What are the issues affecting older people?
2. What areas do you think older people need advice on?
3. Have you ever sought advice on issues? If so, were you happy with the quality of advice received? If not, why not? (See if related to lack of training).
4. Discuss the topics selected for potential inclusion in the course:

Ref	Potential Topics
1	Age Awareness and Advocacy
2	An Overview of Older People's (Welfare) Benefits
3	Retirement Pension
4	Advanced Pension Credit Training
5	Dealing with Elder Abuse
6	Employment and Learning Relating to Older People
7	Wills, Inheritance and Bereavement
8	Health Rights and Services for Older People
9	Community Care
10	Residential and Nursing Care
11	Housing and Older People
12	Financial Planning for Retirement

a) Of the topics in this list which do you think are essential for inclusion in the course, which are desirable and which do you think are not required? Go through each topic and note down number of essentials/desirables/not required and comments.

b) Are there any important topics that you think have been missed from this list? If so, which topics?

5. It is intended to raise awareness of the OPAC amongst advisers, health professionals, carers and social security staff. Do you think there are any other groups/organisations that may be interested in or may benefit from participating in the OPAC? If so, who?

6. Do you work/volunteer in an area that gives advice to older people? If so, would you be interested in participating in the first rollout of the OPAC? Please collect contact details of any interested participants.

**Focus Group Close:**

Thank you for participating in the focus group. Your views and opinions are very important to us and will be used to inform the OPAC.