

Quality money support through practitioners

Raising the status of financial capability support and the quality of delivery



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Quality money support through practitioners

1. Purpose of the document

The document provides a strategic view and high level programme of work for the financial capability practitioners work.

We anticipate that during the course of 18/19 the single financial guidance body (SFGB) will come into existence. Given the draft Bill gives it a statutory remit 'to develop and co-ordinate a national strategy to improve the financial capability of members of the public.....' we see these proposed activities as highly relevant to the new body and likely to fit well with the anticipated statutory role of the SFGB.

2. Vision

This work will raise the status and profile of financial capability support and the quality and consistency of its delivery.

It specifically focusses on practitioners; how can we help them to provide the best possible support for the people they serve? It will be a key strand of work in helping to achieve the aims of the financial capability strategy.

We want to *know* that people are receiving quality money support, and to help the sector attract, retain and develop people; giving money guidance and support the attention and importance that it deserves. We want practitioners and their organisations to have quality resources, training, evidence and insights that they can easily access and use to implement positive change in programmes and services.

We will accomplish this through:

1. Designing and implementing a competency framework, linked to training and qualifications developed in collaboration with the financial capability community and with credible, reputable partners;
2. Building a financial capability practitioner community to broadcast, share and learn:
 - share the latest insights, evidence and major relevant policy change in an actionable and helpful way (e.g. the What Works findings, the wider evidence reviews etc)
 - continue to learn from and understand the particular needs and challenges of the community and share good practices and experiences
 - share other relevant work, tools and resources (such as the outcomes frameworks)

3. Engaging with and garnering support from key influencers, funders and commissioners and creating a compelling business case for providers and their practitioners to get involved;
4. Ensuring that providers and practitioners have access to affordable, quality training and resources.

Each of these areas of work are explored in more detail on pages 7-10.

This work is challenging and complex because it is system change. It involves navigating, listening to and supporting a complicated and diverse community with hundreds of providers and tens of thousands of practitioners with different opinions and different needs.

But this work is based on the belief that we all share aspirations to help people in the most effective way possible.

The raising of the quality of debt advice through the development, implementation and continuous improvement of the quality framework began in 2012 and has taken substantial resource and supporting infrastructure to achieve so it is worth highlighting that significantly more resource will be needed in subsequent years to implement this programme of work.

We probably won't get it "right" first time, but we have a huge amount to learn from and build on internally and externally; both within the financial capability community but also from other system change programmes and related insight.

Really key to this work is that we want to work *with* and *help providers and practitioners*, not just try and implement one solution. MAS doesn't have all the answers- our role is to facilitate and draw on the skills, knowledge and experiences of the many experts "out there".

It's not going to be easy, but we will have to be tenacious: try things, fail, try again, learn, adapt and listen. And it will be worth it: this project will significantly contribute to raising the standard of financial capability support for the UK population.

3. Background

Why are we doing this?

Across the UK, there are many thousands of practitioners delivering financial capability support and money guidance. They range from youth workers who might only be doing it for a fraction of their time, to advisors who do it full time- and everyone in between. They are at the heart of many financial capability interventions and have the power to make a real difference to the way people manage their money.

But currently there is no common view on what good looks like, no definition of even the minimum standards – many practitioners are not even aware of where the regulated boundaries are so could unknowingly wander into that territory. Not only is there no consistent way to help practitioners strive for the best results for their customers; much worse they could inadvertently be giving bad advice and having a negative impact. We have heard many examples of where this has happened.

Additionally, because of the broad definition of what financial capability can include, the fact that it's not regulated and the fluid nature of the way it can be delivered; this work can be less prominent and less valued than it should be.

We were also conscious that with our investment in the What Works Fund, and our wish to spread evidence-based practice more widely, we needed to see if there was a way to create a hunger within the practitioner community for continuous improvement, and whether we could create channels by which evidence (whether from our fund or elsewhere) could be disseminated to practitioners.

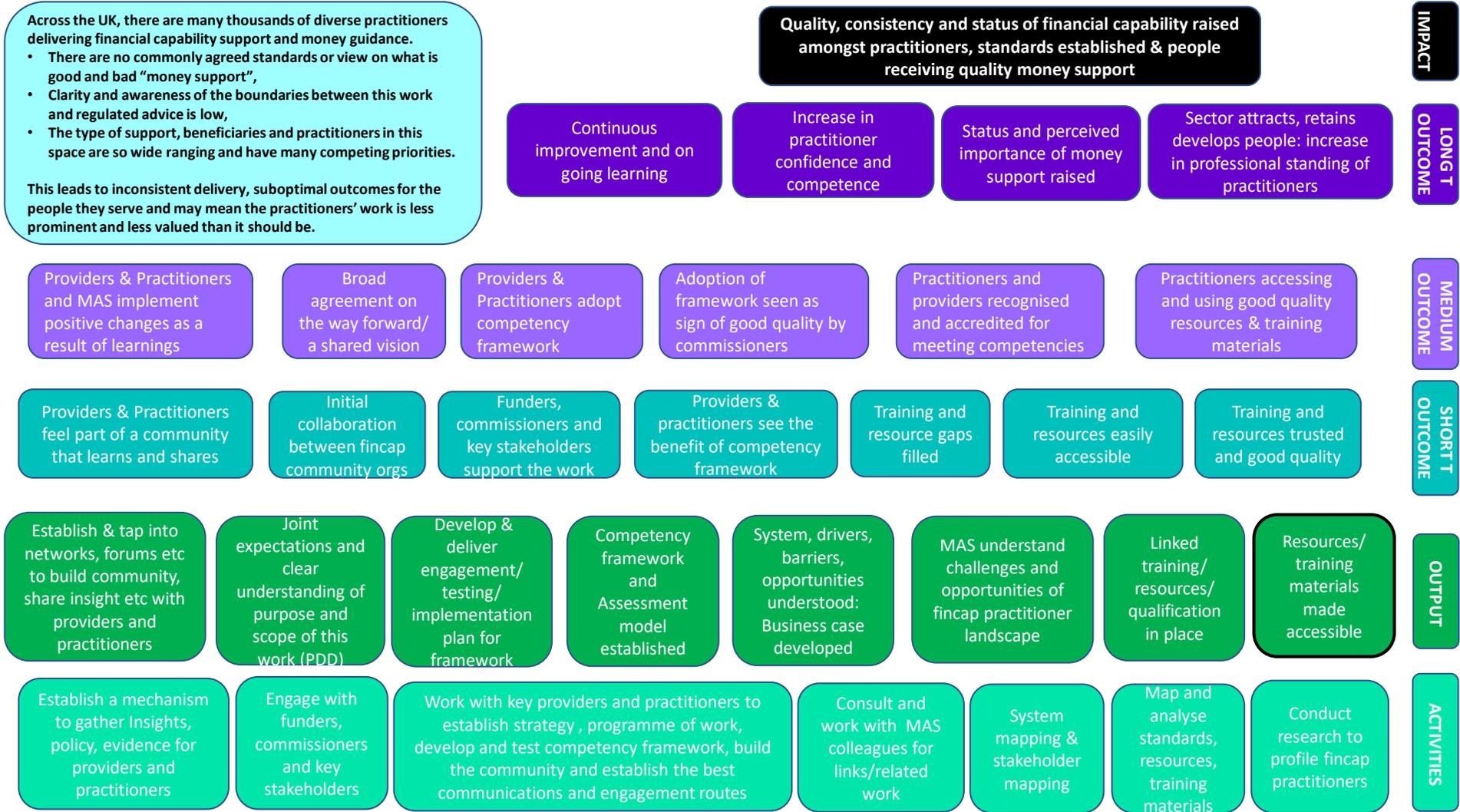
From Oct16 – June 17 we brought together a consortium of some of the key organisations in the diverse money guidance and financial capability practitioner communities in the not-for-profit (NFP) sector (including debt)¹ to understand more fully what types of practitioner there are, their learning needs and whether a competency framework would be a viable solution to raising the standard of delivery.

In-depth interviews with strategic and operational representatives from consortium organisations and other key stakeholders and a survey of practitioners providing financial capability support to individuals was carried out by the Learning and Work Institute. Notwithstanding some of the challenges for the provider and practitioner community, there was a clear appetite and need for this work. The final report from Learning and Work was delivered in August and from there MAS reflected on the findings and in March 2018 allocated me to work on this full time, with the first step to present a way forward for this work.

Many discussions have taken place with individuals from the original consortium and people from MAS to define the scope, challenge assumptions and build up a picture of what this piece of work should be, who it's for and how we go about it.

¹ Age UK; Citizens Advice (England, Wales & Scotland); Improvement Service; National Youth Agency; Money Advice Scotland; National Skills Academy for Financial Services; UK Youth; National Association of Student Money Advisers; Quaker Social Action; Law Centres Network; Toynbee Hall; Institute of Money Advisers; Money Advice Trust; Advice NI; Christians Against Poverty

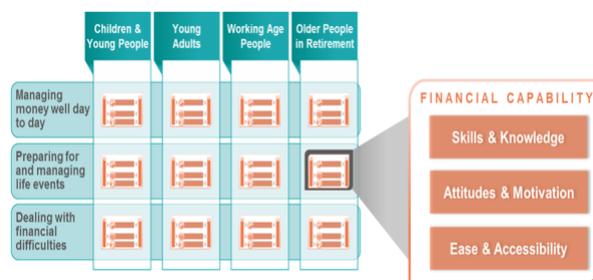
Draft Theory of Change



5. Scope

It was important to revisit some of the thoughts and assumptions of the previous work and define who we mean by “**financial capability practitioners**” and who amongst them we should include or exclude. There were some significant exclusions from the consortium, for example schools and teachers and the private sector (including FS volunteers for example).

So firstly, who do we mean when we say “financial capability and money guidance practitioners?” The MAS definition of financial capability is as follows:



Therefore, for the purposes of this, we can define financial capability practitioners as any practitioner who talks to individuals or groups of people about money management.

So, it will not actively exclude anyone completely. Why should it? Anyone “advising” or giving any kind of information about money should be able to do so at a particular standard. However, because of the breadth of types of practitioner, and eco-systems within which they operate we will need to focus down and decide who we are primarily designing this for.

There are potentially 5 main strands of “support” within this system: **regulated debt, regulated financial advice, financial education, money guidance and more general “financial capability interventions”**. There are also lots of different types of practitioners from a range of diverse organisations. Some practitioners work solely within one particular strand, whilst others work across a few.

It was important to roughly define these strands (accepting that there are some blurred lines) because they have certain characteristics which will help us decide who needs this most and who we design it for.

Below is not comprehensive by any stretch of the imagination, but it starts to give a useful idea about the types of support particular practitioners give and who we could target:

	regulated debt advice	financial education	"Other" - fin cap interventions	Money guidance	regulated financial advice
Practitioner type	recommends a range of debt solutions based on an individuals situation	wholly preventative and generally not for financially independent	Not about making a decision - for example most of the WW projects	Provide information to help people make an informed decision	recommend a specific product or course of action personal to an individual
Debt Advisor	x		x	x	
Financial Advisor (inc broker,pension advisor etc)			x	x	x
Teacher		x			
General "Advisor"			x	x	
Youth Worker			x	x	
FS volunteer		x	x	x	
Housing Officer			x	x	
care co-ordinator			x	x	
mental health officer			x	x	

Focus for design

Below shows who we will prioritise in the programme design. We are open to challenge and it is important to note that as we start to a. map out the whole system, b. map the training and qualifications and c. develop the competencies we'll need to make sure we keep questioning ourselves on this.

6. Links and interdependencies

The success of this programme is heavily dependent on collaboration both internally and externally, and it is critical to understand the linkages with everything else within the wider system.

This work should make things easier for practitioners and we have the opportunity to join things up, rather than just adding another layer on top of what they already have to contend with; the creation of a systems map and the mapping of qualifications, resources and training (planned work in 18/19) will help do this, and there are of course some significant links and interdependencies within each of the MAS Aims that must be considered. For example:

The debt quality work: In 2012 MAS began a journey to raise the quality of debt advice provision, working with partners to make debt advice easier and quicker to access, and to improve standards and quality across the sector. Since that time a huge amount of work has been done, including the development and implementation of quality frameworks, accreditation and peer review.

Although there are different challenges with the Financial Capability community (even though this work will *include* debt advisors); Clearly there is a huge amount to learn from the successes, challenges, knowledge and experiences of those involved.

Outcomes frameworks: MAS has developed a suite of outcomes frameworks and question banks to help organisations measure changes in people's financial capability. They are primarily an evaluation tool, however careful consideration and a detailed understanding of the purpose and contents of all of these frameworks will be needed to make sure they are complementary not conflicting or incompatible.

Practitioner focused toolkits: MAS have already done a number of pieces of work related to the practitioners that serve young people, for example development of an LA package of support and a toolkit for student money advisors. We can learn from these approaches and we will certainly need to stay close, understand what work has already been done, and where appropriate and helpful, join the work up.

Communications, insights, evidence and policy: A key part of this work will be to provide providers and practitioners with the latest insights, evidence and relevant policy changes in a helpful and actionable way. This will link into the cross cutting communication plans and policy and I&E thinking.

Devolved nations: Working closely with the MAS Country Managers and key stakeholders from each of the devolved nations will be critical. The Financial Capability "community" is at different levels of maturity within each of the nations, and the systems within which they sit will sometimes have different drivers, or connections to make. we need to make the most of these existing networks and opportunities.

7. Programme of work

By the end of 18/19 we will have made significant progress to building and strengthening the provider and practitioner community, by tapping into or establishing networks and determining the best engagement and communication routes to broadcast learn and share. We will understand the complex system within which they operate and what significant linkages and drivers we need to consider. A first draft of the framework will be developed and tested with a range of providers and practitioners and we will have approval and support from key funders, commissioners and stakeholders. Different assessment and training models will have been identified and a proposal of options to take the work forward will be produced.

High level activity:

Work area	Phase 2 April 18- Aug 19	19/20 (tba dependant on 18/19 work and proposal)	20/21(tbc)
1. Design and implement a competency framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit partner Develop and test framework Recommendations for future years re: model and infrastructure Map existing quals, training, resources #1 Explore models and required infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree model and infrastructure needed Recruitment, prog design, workstreams etc Pilot assessment models, taking a number of providers through different levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up keep of quals, training and resources Targeted recruitment of providers to take practitioners through the framework and qualification
2. Ensure that providers and practitioners have access to affordable, quality training & resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore potential to informally house / share resources in the short term- dependant on results of mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an on line training platform linked to the competency framework Develop online portal for resources/ training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of platform, resource gaps being filled
3. Understanding and building a community to share, learn and engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder mapping Systems mapping Tap into existing networks in each country/ create networks Find out most useful ways to communicate Explore possibility of joint funding Financial capability Forums Create mechanism to gather latest insights/ tools etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established networks and methods of sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established networks and methods of sharing
4. Create a compelling business case for providers and practitioners to get involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with and garner support from key influencers such as Government, providers, umbrella bodies, Local Authorities etc Identify key drivers Link to future commissioning plans Explore future programme funding arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding for programme Agree and implement decision on commissioning (e.g we won't fund anyone who does not adopt the f/w) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued support

Work areas in more detail

1. Design and implementation of a competency framework

What is a competency framework?

According to CIPD:

“...a competency framework focuses on the personal attributes or inputs of an individual. They can be defined as the behaviours (and technical attributes where appropriate) that individuals must have, or must acquire, to perform effectively at work.”

They are common throughout the public and private sectors and evolved as organisations looked for ways to communicate not just what an individual should do as part of their role, but how they should do it.

Designing a competency framework for financial capability practitioners not only provides a common language and standard to drive good quality and consistent delivery; if linked to training and qualifications and assessed in some way it will raise awareness and status of this non regulated area of support. A “lighter touch”/ non-accredited approach (e.g. signing up to principles, providing guidance etc) was carefully considered but on balance we do not think it will achieve the desired outcomes.

Design principles

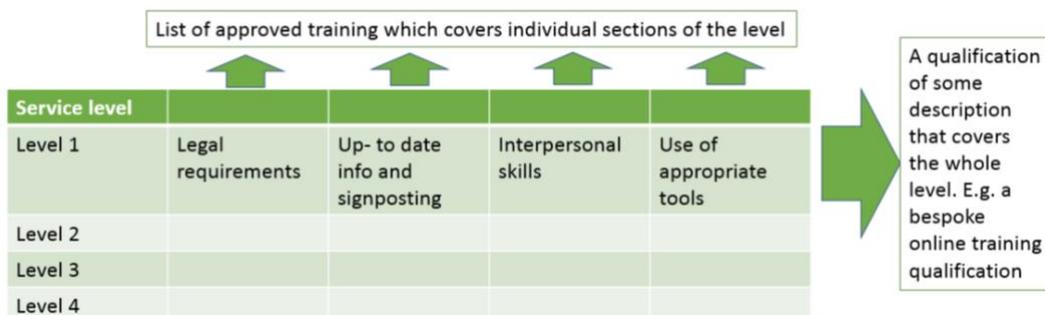
Considering the phase 1 recommendations and the initial internal and external stakeholder meetings, there are some general principles that should be included whilst developing, implementing and managing the framework:

1. **The competencies will be linked to training and qualifications**
2. **The competencies will include delivery, interpersonal and technical skills**
3. **There will be assessment against the framework**
4. **It will have different levels, including some minimum standards set to a level required to deliver a ‘safe’ service to clients.**
5. **It will be as non burdensome as possible to participating organisations**
6. **It will provide practitioners with opportunities for progression.**
7. **It will link to other relevant frameworks and training and not ignore what “is out there” already**
8. **It will consider and link to relevant MAS frameworks**
9. **It will go hand in hand with other work to help and support the community**
10. **It should be relevant to many different practitioners and client groups**
11. **It should recognise that our understanding of what works in both financial capability and advice in general is developing**
12. **The framework is developed collaboratively and tested with a range of types of organisation and practitioner including the MAS contact centre.**

Assessment models

There are different models in regards to how and who should assess whether a practitioner meets the competencies. For example, MAS could be responsible for the assessment, there could be some sort of financial capability institute, MAS could contract a third party to do it, we could adopt more of a self assessment style model. Or a hybrid!

What is very clear is that in order for it to be accessible and attractive to a broad range of providers, many of whom are time poor and have resource challenges; it should not ignore the vast amount of other relevant training that practitioners have already undertaken (even if not specifically for financial capability) and that any additional training needed should have a low cost option. So there could be a bespoke qualification that covers the whole level *and* an approved list of training and courses that cover different elements of the framework, which could count towards the accreditation:



One solution to consider would be to develop **online training modules** that link with the competency framework which could be a low cost option for organisations to access.

These models will need to be explored in full, with a recommendation given as to how to take forward the work in 19/20. To be clear though, whichever specific model is agreed, the end result is that thousands of practitioners will apply to be assessed in some way, so in 19/20 we will need to set up multiple streams of work and specialist resource (e.g. programme design, data solutions, digital design, M.I and evaluation etc.)

Mapping training, resources and qualifications

A key part of 18/19 activity will be mapping the resources, training and qualifications that already exist. This will enable us to map them to the competency framework, understand the systems within which practitioners and providers operate and gain a view on what gaps might exist.

This work can happen at the same time as developing the framework and could quite possibly be the same partner/ part of a consortium that develop the framework.

2. Ensure that providers and practitioners have access to affordable, quality training and resources

Once the initial mapping has been done, we will have a picture of all the resources, qualifications and training available. We will understand how and where practitioners access these, if they are free, easily accessible and how they might link to the competencies framework. It may be possible in 18/19 to do some modest activity to widen the access to resources; using the networks, promoting particular sites and housing something simple on the Financial capability website. Very careful consideration would need to be given to “recommendations” though. Greater consideration can be given to this in 19/20.

3. Understanding and building a community to share, learn and engage

This is absolutely key to the success of what we are trying to do. If we are to help providers and practitioners deliver the best possible money support, it is not solely through a competencies framework. We will gather and communicate the latest insights, evidence (e.g. What Works findings) and relevant policy and packaging it in a way that is useful and useable. There are some practitioner forums and groups already in existence; we will learn and build from them and consider how to approach both practitioner level and provider level. And crucially, as well as offering information; it will be a place where we can all share experiences and knowledge, understand barriers; learn and improve.

Though we will not continue with the original consortium from phase one we will continue to engage with those organisations (through 1:1 meetings, updates, occasional larger meetings) and complete stakeholder mapping to widen the range of organisations that work closely with on this work.

4. Create a compelling business case for providers and practitioners to get involved

Through the other strands of work we will get a clear view on what the drivers are for providers and practitioners to be involved; to join the networks and to adopt the competency framework. But we will also want to engage with and garner support from key influencers such as Government, umbrella bodies, Local Authorities etc and consider how our own future commissioning plans will form part of the business case. Dependent on what the views of the SFGB are, we may well want to explore different funding options for the future.