

Qualifications Update and Internal Market Act, 2020

Northern Ireland

Social

Care

Council

Health and Social Care Qualifications Update

- **Level 2 Certificate in Safe and Effective Practice in Health and Social Care (H&SC)** – five Awarding Organisations delivering.
- **Level 2 Diploma in Health and Social Care (NI)** – five Awarding Organisations delivering.
- **Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care Practice (NI)** – five Awarding Organisations delivering.
- **Level 4 Diploma in Enhanced Health and Social Care Practice (NI)** – three Awarding organisations to date, with remaining two to follow in near future.

Health and Social Care Qualifications Update

Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Health and Social Care Services (NI):

- Agreed and finalised by the sector and Awarding Organisations in March 2026.
- A singular management level qualification – amalgamates and replaces the two existing management qualifications and will be added to DoH/ RQIA service standards end of June 2026.
- Will enable the qualification holder to be a registered manager across the range of adult health and social care services – including, day care, domiciliary/ home care and residential care homes.

Internal Market Act (IMA) 2020 – Overview

- Ensures smooth trade of goods and services across Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales after Brexit.
- Introduces two core principles: Mutual Recognition and Non-discrimination.
- Limits the ability of each UK Nation, as devolved administrations, to create differing regulatory requirements.

IMA, 2020 – Impact on Social Care Services

- Workforce: professional qualifications recognised across the UK.
- Employers must comply with UK-wide standards while monitoring local guidance.
- Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) are currently scoping the wider implications of the IMA, 2020 on Social Care across the UK Nations.

H&SC Apprenticeships and the Traineeship in H&SC



Updated Level 2 and 3 H&SC AppsNI Frameworks

- Updated apprenticeship frameworks aligned to the Care in Practice (CiP) Framework:
 - **Level 2 Apprenticeships NI H&SC Framework:** supports new practitioners to develop safe, effective practice in social care.
 - **Level 3 Apprenticeships NI H&SC Framework:** develops competence and judgement for more experienced social care practitioners.
- Funded through ApprenticeshipsNI and regulated by the Department for the Economy (DfE) in Northern Ireland.
- **Level 5 Diploma - Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) Framework** in H&SC – funded and regulated by DfE.

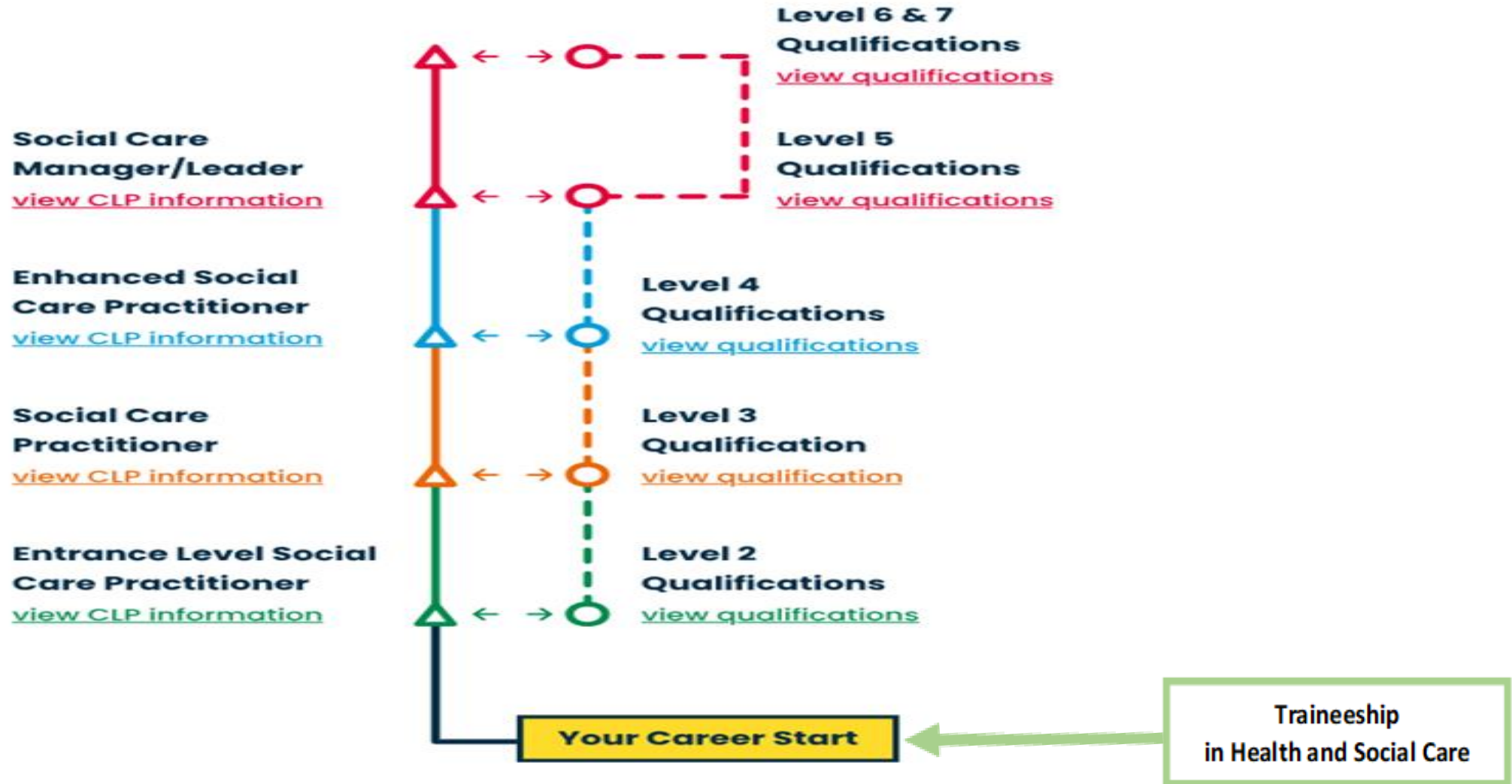
What the updated AppsNI Frameworks mean for Social Care employers and managers

- Clear progression routes from entry-level to more experienced and skilled practitioner roles.
- Apprentices must be employed and supported in the workplace.
- Managers provide supervision, mentoring and assessment opportunities to support apprentices in undertaking their qualification.
- Apprenticeships support recruitment, retention and quality of care.

Health and Social Care (H&SC) Traineeship

- Currently being developed by the H&SC Traineeship Working Group – including, representatives from the FE colleges and the Social Care Council.
- Will be delivered by Further Education (FE) colleges – supporting young people, aged 16+, to prepare for a career in H&SC.
- Consists of 8 units - facilitating progression onto various career pathways in Health and Social Care professions.
- Will be added as a pre-employment qualification on the CiP Framework, supporting recruitment and retention in the sector.

Traineeship in Health and Social, NI



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