What is the framework?
This practice framework aims to support social workers in NI to recognise and respond to the impact of poverty on individuals, families and communities.

Why do we need a framework?
Poverty is an increasingly serious problem in NI society which disproportionately affects many of the service users we wish to support. Poverty is a major social injustice and as a profession committed to social justice, it should be a core concern. Social work’s purpose is to improve and safeguard social well-being and tackling poverty is central to enhancing well-being.

What is poverty?
The Age UK definition of poverty is “when a person’s resources are not enough to meet their basic needs and allow them to take part in society. This could mean struggling to cover food and energy bills, watching every penny spent, worrying that nothing is set aside for a sudden emergency such as the cooker breaking down or being unable to afford the cost of transport needed to visit a friend or go to a social club.”

Read the anti-poverty practice framework at www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/doh-anti-poverty-framework

Don’t be afraid to ask about poverty.

Recognise and understand the impact of poverty and use that understanding to inform your responses to individuals, families and communities.

Listen to and learn from service users about their own experiences of poverty.
Co-produce your responses to poverty. Recognise the resilience of many of those coping with poverty and use a strengths based approach to mutually identify and agree the right sort of support.

Understand that poverty is a social injustice and social oppression. Include poverty in your anti-oppressive practice and guard against personal, cultural and structural discrimination against those experiencing poverty.

Support service users to improve their material circumstances. Make applications for benefits and practical help, use Art. 18 & Art.15 and carers’ payments, advise about support such as food banks, luncheon clubs, clothes banks, faith groups and rent deposit schemes.

Use your advocacy, resource brokering and systems negotiation skills. Challenge a landlord about making repairs, accompany a service user to a benefits hearing, negotiate better repayment terms with a loans company, write supporting letters for grants.

Support service users experiencing poverty to improve their self-esteem. Form respectful relationships with service users which promote dignity, self-belief and self-esteem. Encourage service users to find their voice and challenge their situation.

Think poverty in policy and service provision decisions.

Work in partnership with local communities to promote and support community empowerment in relation to poverty. Think about how you could support areas such as community mobilisation, social investment, community interest companies and volunteer resources.

Be a leader. Educate and influence others to become poverty aware and engage in anti-poverty practice.

Train social workers to recognise and respond to poverty.

Undertake research about social work and poverty.