



# AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice

UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists (UKVRN)



# Introduction

## About us

We are the Association for Nutrition (AfN), an independent regulator for nutritionists set up to protect and benefit the public. We do this by making sure only those who meet and maintain our high standards for knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviour can join and remain on the UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists (UKVRN). The individuals on our register are collectively referred to as ‘registrants’ and are made up of Registered Associate Nutritionists (ANutr) and Registered Nutritionists (RNutr).

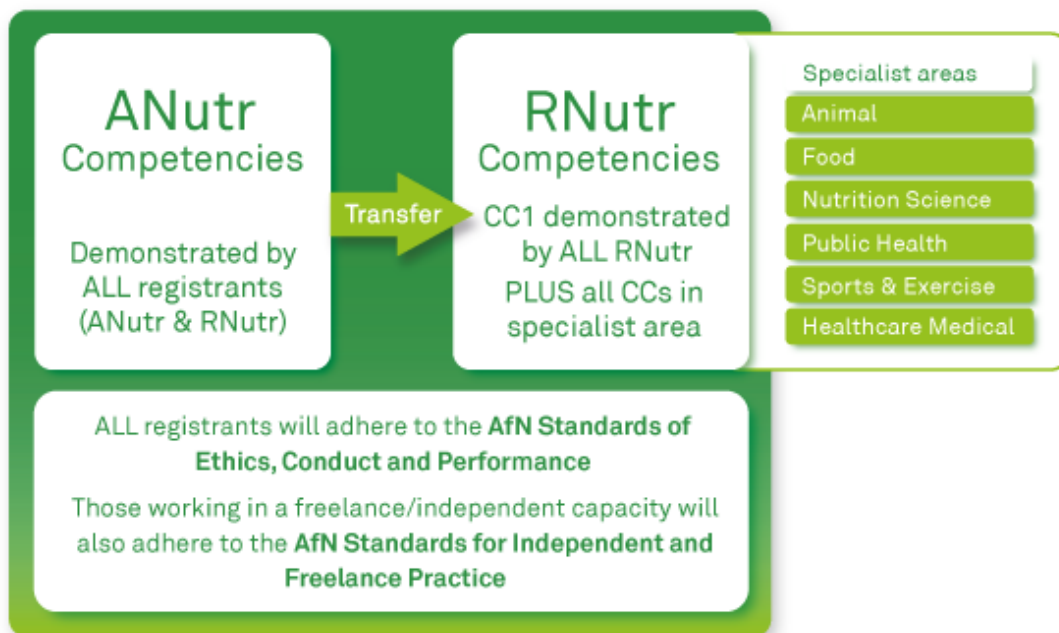
## This document

An increasing number of registrants are practising in an independent/freelance capacity. This document sets out the AfN Standards for UKVRN Registrants (ANutr and RNutr) practising independently and/or in a freelance capacity. These Standards have been identified as the minimum requirements for all such UKVRN registrants to practice safely, ethically and effectively.

**We define independent and freelance practice as: *“providing services in a paid or unpaid capacity, where the nutrition-related activities are undertaken with no direct supervision, guidance or support.”* For example, you are employed within an organisation but practise independently of any other nutrition professionals, are self-employed, or are independently providing advice in a voluntary capacity.**

The AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice apply to all ANutr and RNutr who conduct any independent/freelance activities, regardless of the number of clients, whether directly with the public, e.g., providing on-to-one consultations, with community groups, brands, organisations or business clients. They apply across all platforms and settings in which the activities take place, including, but not limited to, online, face-to-face, written communications, consultations (public, business, industry), and group settings.

These standards have been designed in conjunction with the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance, which ensure our registrants practise safely, effectively, appropriately and in the best interest of the public at all times, with both being adhered to by those practising in this area.



## Development of this document

This official AfN document has been designed to support our existing Standards (reviewed November 2021; effective as of January 2022) that all UKVRN Registrants agree to uphold upon registration, and again upon annual renewal.

This is the first version of the AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice, following feedback received from registrants and stakeholders during the AfN consultation on registration competencies.

This version of the AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice will be routinely reviewed to address stakeholder feedback, fitness to practise issues or changes to best practice guidance issued by the Professional Standards Authority or UK Government.

This document can be used by our Registrants, applicants, clients/service users, educators, colleagues and the public, to understand the standards expected of nutritionists practising independently or in a freelance capacity, in alignment with the AfN Standards of Ethics Conduct and Performance.

## Clients, employers, colleagues and the public

These standards will help you to understand how we expect our registrants providing freelance services and/or practising independently to act in their professional activities and settings, whether you are a client or service user, a colleague, or a member of the public.

UKVRN Registrants who offer independent/freelance services have agreed to uphold the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance, as well as all supporting guidance and standards, including those set out in this document.

Independent and Freelance Registrants must practise in accordance with the standards within this document, with a statement on the Search the Register page indicating Registrants' commitment to upholding these standards. This makes it clear what you can expect, as a minimum standard, from Registrants offering services within these contexts.

If something ever goes wrong, you can be reassured that anyone can raise a concern through our fitness to practise process (detailed on the AfN website). We take your concerns seriously and we can take action when these identify a serious issue regarding a registrant's knowledge, understanding, skills or behaviour.

## Educators

As an educator you can use this document alongside the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance and core competency requirements for registration as a tool to help prepare students and enable them to understand what is expected of them as nutrition professionals and how keeping to the AfN standards will help them achieve this.

If you are a training provider or AfN-accredited course provider looking to develop modules that cover the areas listed in this document, please see our additional guidance for further support.

## Registrants and applicants

As a registrant engaging in independent/freelance practice, you must ensure that you are familiar with the standards set out within this document and the main AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance document, and that you act in accordance with them.

UKVRN Registrants who practise independently or in a freelance capacity can select the services they offer from the range of services listed on the register. Upon selection, Registrants are reminded that they must read and agree to uphold the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance and any supporting guidance and standards, ticking the box to confirm they have done so.

A statement on the Search the Register page will indicate registrants must practise in accordance with the AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice, making it clear to the public, clients/service users, and other health professionals what they can expect as a minimum standard.

If any complaints are received regarding a Registrants independent/freelance practice, your compliance with the AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice will be taken into account.



# AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice

## 1. Adhere to Legal Requirements

**As a professional you are personally responsible and accountable for your actions, the way you behave and the choices you make within your practice. This includes understanding and adhering to any legal duties required of your business and practice.**

**Demonstrate safe and professional practice through understanding and adhering to legal requirements and procedures.**

To achieve this, you must ensure:

- Appropriate business policies and procedures for the gathering and storage of data, privacy, and complaints, adhering to relevant regulations, such as data protection/GDPR are in place and complied with
- Any business contracts you have responsibility for comply with legal requirements, and you are aware of legal documents and responsibilities, such as non-disclosure agreements, understanding the implications of signing or breaching such documents and identifying when you should seek professional legal support
- Appropriate insurance is in place, understanding business, liability and legal risks involved in providing advice or services

## 2. Communicate and Consult Appropriately

**The public, clients, and businesses benefit from communication delivered effectively and appropriately regarding the services provided by independent and freelance registrants.**

**Conduct client and business communications and consultations professionally and ethically.**

To achieve this, you must ensure you:

- Use language and communication styles appropriate to business setting and platform
- Present nutritional science information to your audience in a suitable format and communication media
- Collaborate effectively and ethically, including, but not limited to, with health/medical professionals and in brand, sponsorship and influencer activities
- Market your services appropriately, professionally, and ethically in line with AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance
- Design and plan appropriate client consultations, including structure, required paperwork, resource provision and appropriate software, platforms and technology
- Manage client expectations from initial communications through to activity end
- Establish appropriate professional networks to allow for collaboration and onward referrals, understanding which clients you can provide services to and who to refer to when activity is outside own scope of practice or supervision is required
- Use appropriate behavioural change methods and interpersonal skills, e.g., active listening, recognising when adaptation is necessary to overcome barriers, during activities involving the public
- Support clients with setting and agreeing realistic goals, e.g., by using the SMART method, measuring progress effectively and adapting when necessary

### 3. Reflect, Evaluate and Support

**Nutritionists practising independently or in a freelance capacity are less likely to have regular contact and support from other nutrition professionals. Therefore, it is important to regularly undertake Continual Professional Development (CPD) activities.**

**Demonstrate regular reflection, evaluation and development of professional practice and competence.**

To achieve this, you must ensure you:

- Apply reflective practice to your activities, auditing and amending own practice to manage risk and improve output
- Establish appropriate support systems, understanding the importance of support for development at all career stages and experience levels, for example, RNutr to ANutr mentorship, or RNutr to RNutr peer support





## Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
<b>AfN</b>	Association for Nutrition
<b>AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance</b>	AfN professional standards designed to ensure our registrants practise safely, effectively, appropriately and in the best interest of the public. The standards apply at all times to all Registrants, regardless of their field of activity, contract of employment or membership/ registration with any other professional organisation.
<b>Appropriate indemnity/insurance provision</b>	An insurance policy or contractual obligation which protects (provides a guarantee of compensation) against possible eventualities such as damages, illness, losses or other financial burdens due to registrants themselves or any other party.
<b>Clients</b>	Individuals, group of individuals or population groups (including animals and/or those who represent their interests) for whom the registrant holds responsibility because of their professional service or advice.
<b>Communicating effectively</b>	Conveying relevant information, at an appropriate time and in a way which suits the audience.
<b>Communication media</b>	Any channel, tool or means used to communicate messages or information, whether verbal, written, graphic, face-to-face, social media or via blogs or websites.
<b>Consultation</b>	A meeting or process of discussing something with an individual, group or business, in order to provide advice. This may include one-to-one consultations with nutrition clients, or business consultations with organisations, whether online, written, or face-to-face.

<b>Continuing Professional Development (CPD)</b>	The undertaking of activities to continually learn in order to develop, maintain and enhance knowledge and skills.
<b>Contract</b>	A legal document that states and explains a formal agreement between two different people or groups, that is intended to be enforceable by law.
<b>Freelance nutritionist</b>	A nutritionist who is self-employed and hired by different companies to provide services or complete agreed assignments. This may also be referred to as a 'self-employed nutritionist'.
<b>Guidance</b>	Additional detail on how to apply the standards daily/in practice.
<b>High standards</b>	In these standards, high standards refer to consistently fulfilling ethical principles to an excellent or outstanding quality.
<b>Independent and freelance practice</b>	Providing services in a paid or unpaid capacity, where the nutritional aspects are provided free from outside control. For example, you are employed within an organisation but work independently of any other nutrition professionals, are self-employed, or are independently providing advice in a voluntary capacity.
<b>Mentor - ANutr</b>	An AfN mentor is a person with subject-specific knowledge, normally a Registered Nutritionist (RNutr), who is willing to act as a trusted adviser for a less experienced ANutr registrant (the mentee).
<b>Mentor - Peer to Peer</b>	An AfN peer-mentor is a fellow Registered Nutritionist (RNutr), with subject-specific knowledge and experience, who is willing to act as a trusted adviser for another RNutr registrant (the mentee).
<b>Multidisciplinary team (MDT)</b>	A team of health professionals from different specialisations or fields, collaborating to deliver comprehensive patient care. In nutrition, this might include a team of Nutritionists, Registered Dietitians and Medical Doctors.

<b>Refer/Referral</b>	To send, direct, or signpost a client to another health professional or service.
<b>Scope of practice</b>	The areas of nutrition in which a registrant is trained, has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to practise safely and effectively.
<b>Standards</b>	The ethical principles by which all UKVRN registrants must abide.
<b>Staying up to date</b>	Maintaining and extending knowledge and skills, e.g., this could be through a combination of learning activities known as Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
<b>UKVRN</b>	United Kingdom Voluntary Register of Nutritionists
<b>UKVRN Registrants</b>	Registered Associate Nutritionist (ANutr), Registered Nutritionist (RNutr) and Registered Nutritionist & Fellow of Association for Nutrition (RNutr FAFN).



## Useful links

Below you will find a list of useful and relevant links to support the information provided in this document. These standards support the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance, so more details on the Standards can be found there, for example, around social media use, CPD, insurance/indemnity provision, data protection, relevant legislation and guidelines, and collaborations.

### **AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance**

<https://www.associationfornutrition.org/careers-nutrition/code-of-ethics-conduct>

### **AfN Scope of Practice Guidance**

*To be added once developed.*

### **ANutr Development Framework**

*To be added once developed.*

### **Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs>

### **UK Government: set up a business**

<https://www.gov.uk/set-up-business>

### **Companies House: guidance for limited companies, partnerships and other company types**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/companies-house-guidance-for-limited-companies-partnerships-and-other-company-types>

### **Business Gateway**

<https://www.bgateway.com/>



## **Afn-Endorsed CPD Activities**

<https://www.associationfornutrition.org/careers-nutrition/endorsed-cpd/endorsed-cpd-activities>

## **SENSE**

<https://www.sense-nutrition.org.uk/>

## **NII**

<https://www.nii.org.uk/>



*Regulating Professionals – Raising Standards – Improving Health*

**[www.associationfornutrition.org](http://www.associationfornutrition.org)**

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1.0	First version approved and published (implemented from July 2023)	April 2023