**Certification Support Officer**

**Background:**

A Certification Support Officer (CSO) is a paraprofessional role providing support to an authorised Certifying Officer (CO) in relation to the official activity of export health certification of products of animal origin and animal by products, but excluding certification of germplasm and live animals.

**CSO Role**

A CSO will act only in an official supporting role and under the direction and supervision of an authorised CO. The CO is ultimately responsible for the actions of the CSO under their direction and supervision. Please see **Certifying Officer Responsibilities** section below. A CSO may be employed by or provide services to a DAERA authorised CO who is an authorised Private Veterinary Practitioner (aPVPs were formerly referred to as AVIs) in private veterinary practice/ business in Northern Ireland and/or an Environmental Health Officer who is authorised by DAERA as a Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO) in a Local Authority in Northern Ireland. Where further reference is made in this document to a CO, this includes a FCCO.

A CSO can gather and provide verification evidence to a CO to enable the signing of DAERA official Export Health Certificates (EHCs) or Support Health Attestations (SHAs) by the CO.

CSOs can only carry out factual inspections, factual verification, collection of evidence and documentation (demonstrating verification has been personally attested by them), as specified by the supervising CO, for the directly related product and certificate. When documentary checks are made the CSO can use their DAERA issued stamp to endorse documents being supplied to the CO as evidence. Examples include checking identification of products such as batch numbers and checking labelling against requirements. Any assessment which requires an aPVP or EHO (FCCO) professional judgement is excluded.

Delivery of the training for authorised CSOs is currently provided by **Improve International**. Applicants must register and pay for an online training module and exam. The course which CSO candidates must complete is called the **Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Professional) OCQ (APH) CSO** course.

**FOLLOW LINK BELOW TO THE STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR CSO REGISTRATION**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/certification-support-officer](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/certification-support-officer)

**CSO authorisation**

Administration of CSO authorisation and approvals

Administration of CSO authorisations and approvals in Northern Ireland is managed centrally by DAERA`s Trade Programme.

DAERA will be notified automatically by Improve International once registration and training is complete and will confirm the authorisation of AHP CSO status. This can take up to 7 working days.

[Link to Terms and conditions of appointment](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/certification-support-officer)

Issue of personal stamps

DAERA will issue each CSO with a personal stamp to use on supporting documentation relating to export health certificates (EHC) and support health attestations (SHA) only. The stamp **must not** be applied to EHCs and SHAs or used for any other purpose. DAERA will contact the CSO via email to arrange delivery.

Surrender of Stamp

Where a CSO no longer acts in their official capacity as a CSO, or when requested by DAERA, they must return their stamp to DAERA.

Revalidation of authorisation

Authorisation is valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue of the CSO certificate.

CSOs must revalidate their authorisation before the 3 year period expires to maintain their CSO status. Failure to revalidate by the deadline will result in expiry of the authorisation. Please see link for more information [Revalidation of CSO authorisation](https://www.improve-ahp.com/about/revalidation.php)

Contact Improve International for all requests for CSO training or revalidation:

* web: <https://improve-ahp.com/home/>
* Email: enquiries@improve-ahp.com
* Tel: 0330 202 0380

**Certifying Officer Responsibilities**

All COs who are being supported by a CSO are responsible for advising them of the following:

* The CO should familiarise themselves with the [Terms and Conditions of appointment of a CSO](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/certification-support-officer)
* Relevant product(s) and processing details.
* Process for verification, including instruction on the method of evidence collection.
* Any relevant site familiarisation including hygiene, biosecurity and health and safety requirements.
* COs are also responsible for all actions and official activities carried out by the CSO acting under their direction and must advise DAERA of any issues which may affect the authorisation status of the CSO.
* CO should retain all documents provided by the CSO as supporting evidence.

When registering for CSO training all CSO candidates must nominate an authorised CO. Please see link for details on [supervisor requirement for eligibility checks.](https://www.improve-ahp.com/about/supervision.php)

**Only one CO can be nominated by the candidate registering for training and authorisation and this should normally be the clinical director (who is also a CO) of the practice or the lead EHO (FCCO) of the local authority. Whilst all COs who instruct and direct the CSO have responsibility for the work the CSO carries out on their behalf overall responsibility lies with the clinical director (CO) of the practice or the lead EHO (FCCO).**

**If a CO has any concerns about the CSO`s performance of their duties or any issues that may impact the CSO’s authorisation status they should notify DAERA immediately:** ***DAERATradeExports@daera-ni.gov.uk***