



# Understanding the QAF refresh: a Sitra guide



# Contents

03	Introduction
04	Sitra training and consultancy and the revised QAF
05	About Sitra
06	The new Quality Assessment Framework ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , March 2009, page 10)
08	<b>Core Objective 1:</b> QAF in detail: Assessment and support planning ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , May 2009, page 8)
10	<b>Core Objective 2:</b> Security, health and safety ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , November 2009, page 6)
12	<b>Core Objective 3:</b> Safeguarding and protection from abuse ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , July 2009, page 16)
14	<b>Core Objective 4:</b> Fair access, diversity and inclusion ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , August/September 2009, page 12)
15	<b>Core Objective 5:</b> Client involvement and the regulatory framework ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , July 2009, page 18)
16	QAF lite ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , October 2009, page 16)
17	Frequently Asked Questions ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , October 2009, page 17)
18	What is passporting ( <i>Sitra bulletin</i> , December/January 2009, page 16)

# Introduction

Since April 2009, Sitra have been given the responsibility for updating and maintaining the Refreshed Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) by Communities and Local Government. Sitra were fundamental in the drafting, piloting and reviewing of the refreshed QAF and as a result we have acquired a detailed knowledge of the QAF and how it can be implemented. Providers in the housing with support and care sector can benefit from our expertise through the conferences, training and consultancy we offer.

At the beginning of last year we hosted 18 regional events on behalf of the CLG to launch the new QAF. The issue of how to use the refreshed QAF to demonstrate quality featured strongly in our major national conference on Quality and Professionalism held in September 2009.

We ran approximately 150 public and inhouse QAF training courses during 2009 for a mixture of providers and commissioners throughout the country. We ensure that our courses are tailored to local needs and issues as well as ensuring that our trainers are knowledgeable about the client group whom the service provides for. See page 4 to find out more about the services we offer around the refreshed QAF.

In order to ensure that the QAF is a tool which remains useful and accessible to the sector, we have set up reference groups to inform us of how the QAF is being implemented, questions arising from the QAF and how it is being used throughout the country. Contact Lucy Woodbine (details below) to find out more.

This publication is a collection of articles explaining the new QAF in detail which have appeared in our membership magazine, the **Sitra bulletin** over the past year. We hope you find them informative.

## Contact us

If you would like to find out more about the revised QAF and the work Sitra are doing, visit the QAF pages on our website at [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) or contact Lucy Woodbine at [lucyw@sitra.org](mailto:lucyw@sitra.org) or on 020 7793 4711.

## What is the revised QAF

The QAF is a tool used by all but two of the upper-tier local authorities in England and is regarded as one of the successes of the Supporting People programme. It is designed to be used by providers as an internal monitoring tool as well as by Supporting People teams as a contract management tool. It provides a standard for providers to measure themselves against when delivering services.

Five years into the Supporting People programme a decision was made to refresh the QAF. During 2008/09 a working group made up of Communities and Local Government, Sitra, the National Housing Federation and a number of providers and commissioners refreshed the QAF. Following a consultation with 19 local authorities, 50 providers and further feedback from 50 providers and commissioners, changes were made to the pilot document to reflect the feedback. The refreshed QAF was launched in April 2009.

# Sitra training and consultancy and the revised QAF

## Consultancy

Sitra offer consultancy services around the QAF, tailoring our work to your needs. We feel that the QAF should be used as an internal quality management tool and that all providers should strive to provide the best service possible for their clients. We can carry out the following services:

### Full mock validation

A full mock inspection would involve a review of policies and procedures, a service visit, client file reviews, and staff and client interviews. The length of time for this piece of work would range upwards from five days depending on the size of the service being inspected and includes a one to two day service visit. In the report we will grade the service, give recommendations of how the service can improve and how to present evidence of what the service achieves, and highlight any areas which the service could demonstrate more clearly.

### Focused mock validation

We can carry out a shorter mock inspection only looking at one core objective, for example, C1.1.1 Assessment and Support Planning. We have found that providers note that they may have a strength or weakness in one or two core objectives and would

like just to focus on this. This work would take upwards of two days, including a half day to one day service visit.

### Desktop review

Sitra can offer a desk top review of services, which would take three days per service including write up. We will review the finalised QAF document to be submitted and advise which level of the QAF we feel that it meets. The report will look at whether sufficient evidence has been offered and suggest alternative or extra evidence.

We can also provide bespoke consultancy through discussion with clients. Please note that the grades Sitra suggests may not be the same grades awarded by the Supporting People team due to local interpretation of the QAF.

To find out more about our consultancy services, contact Vic Rayner at vicr@sitra.org or on 020 7793 4710.



## Training We offer the following courses on the QAF:

Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) (2 days)

**25-26 January London**

**9-10 June London**

This two-day course provides a broad overview and gives participants an opportunity to become familiar with the core changes and to think about how the QAF will apply to the services provided. It will also explore how information will be gathered by commissioners and potential changes in requirements to both gather and present evidence. The course will cover:

- Detailed overview of the core objectives
- How the QAF will be assessed
- Exploration of core themes running throughout all standards
- An update on supplementary objectives.

Price: Members £275  
Non-members £380

QAF: monitoring and evaluating services

**2 March London**

**26 April Bristol**

**18 June London**

**7 July Birmingham**

This course is essential for all local authority review officers and those interested in self assessment of their organisation's services. It will give participants the chance to think about how the new framework will change the way services are reviewed and highlight good practice. The course will cover:

- The new grading system for the QAF
- Approaches to gathering evidence
- Using the new tools for assessing evidence and final grades
- Exploring good practice
- Capturing and assessing evidence.

Price: Members £135  
Non-members £195

Quality and standards

**24 May London**

Those working in housing related support services, should ensure that they have an understanding of demonstrating quality of their services. Housing related support services are covered by a number of Quality tools and standards which services need to demonstrate that they are meeting. This course will look at the interrelation between the standards and how they impact on front line work. It will provide an introduction into:

- The QAF (Supporting People funded services)
- The Tenant Service Authority Standards (Housing Management)
- Equality regulations
- KLOEs (Key Lines of Enquiry)
- CQC (Care Quality Commission)
- CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment)
- National indicators.

Price: Members £135  
Non-members £195

Many of our other courses touch upon aspects of the QAF, including:

- Child protection
- Equality and diversity
- Equality and diversity for managers
- Health and safety 1
- Health and safety 2
- Housing support: the basics
- Safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults (formerly POVA).

Full details and a booking form can be found in our January to July 2010 training guide. You can download a pdf version of the guide from our website at [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) or you can request a hard copy by emailing [lanaj@sitra.org](mailto:lanaj@sitra.org)

## Inhouse training

All the above course can be delivered inhouse to groups of between 6 to 16 people at a time and venue of your choice. Courses can be tailored to focus on the QAF objective most relevant to your organisation. For more about the inhouse training we offer, see page 9.

**Sitra is endorsed by the CLG as a training provider for the revised QAF.**



# About Sitra

## Sitra champions excellence in housing, support and care

Sitra is a membership organisation providing leadership, influencing policy through expertise, promoting best practice and providing consultancy, training, information and advice to:

- Promote positive outcomes for clients, providers and funders
- Drive the policy agenda
- Encourage a healthy, diverse and sustainable sector
- Support quality and professionalisation.

As a result of Sitra's active and longstanding involvement in the sector and its close links with providers, commissioners and funders of supported housing services in England, we hold a unique position in the market.

As the supported housing sector undergoes a period of substantial change, Sitra is engaging with issues revolving around the lifting of the Supporting People ring fence, the personalisation agenda, commissioning, procurement and partnership, including framework agreements, the establishment of the Homes and Communities Agencies (HCA) and the Tenants Services Authority (TSA) and managing and delivering quality services, particularly in relation to the revised Quality Assessment Framework (QAF).

## Sitra membership

### To take advantage of the services that Sitra provides at discounted rates, why not become a member?

Sitra membership is open to all voluntary agencies, supported housing associations and statutory bodies, as well as private consultants and trainers.

Sitra membership is now, more than ever, one of the most important things your organisation can have. With prices held at 2009 rates and substantial member discounts the new package offers even greater value for money.

The 2010 membership package delivers enhanced savings:

- Public courses and inhouse training - increased member discount
- Consultancy and conferences - increased member discount
- 10 issues of the redesigned **Sitra bulletin** packed with invaluable news on policy developments in the housing, care and support sector
- Monthly, re-launched e-news including event and sector news and policy briefings on topical issues
- Free events and special offers for members throughout the year
- Free advice and support through our email helpline, [sitrahelpline@sitra.org](mailto:sitrahelpline@sitra.org)
- New member benefit: 50 per cent discount voucher.



## How to join us

You can complete a short online form to request a membership application pack at the "Join us" section of our website at [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) or you can email the Membership Administrator at [post@sitra.org](mailto:post@sitra.org)

If you are not sure if your organisation is a member or not, and you need to check please email [post@sitra.org](mailto:post@sitra.org).

## Sitra bulletin

In a rapidly changing world, can you afford not to have your own copy of the **Sitra bulletin** delivered directly to your desk?

The bulletin is received by all Sitra members and is widely recognised as a key source of technical information and policy development news throughout the housing with care and support sector. Member organisations can order extra copies at minimal cost.

To order, contact the Membership Administrator on 020 7793 4710.



## Recruiting staff?

With a growing circulation of over 4,000 copies the Sitra bulletin is well placed to advertise your recruitment vacancies.

The bulletin reaches specialist staff working within the housing with support and care sector. It has countrywide coverage and offers discounted advertising rates to Sitra members. For more information on placing an advert call 020 7793 4713.

# The new Quality Assessment

Lucy Woodbine explains the refreshed guidance

Five years into the Supporting People programme, a decision was made to refresh the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). A working group made up of the CLG (Department of Communities and Local Government), Sitra, the NHF (National Housing Federation) and a number of providers and commissioners worked on the review. The pilot QAF was sent out for consultation with providers and commissioners between July and October 2008. Of the 120 responses from those consulted, the majority were mainly positive - 81% found the language easier to understand, with the new language and layout being welcomed.

## Main changes to the QAF

The main change to the QAF is the removal of the prescriptive list at levels A and B. Services at levels A and B have to demonstrate that they make the grade through examples of the work they are carrying out. This is a move away from the prescriptive list that the old QAF included, instead using evidence examples, which allows services to demonstrate their value in a variety of ways. However, at level C, a mandatory list remains, which is the minimum level that providers should meet. Providers who do not meet level C will be seen to not have met the standard at all, as there is no longer a level D.

During the pilot, there was a requirement in a number of services to have policies and procedures reviewed every two years. This has now been amended to every three years. The requirement to carry out CRB checks has also been amended to every three years from two years. However the frequency of CRB checks will be also based on contractual requirements.

The new QAF objectives are as follows:

Objective	Number of standards	
	Refreshed QAF	Old QAF
C 1.1 Assessment and Support Planning	5	28
C 1.2 Security, Health and Safety	3	15
C 1.3 Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse	5	12
C 1.4 Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion	3	23
C 1.5 Client Involvement and Empowerment	5	40
TOTAL	21	118

## What do the performance levels mean?

**Level A:** means "excellence" and is associated with providers striving to be leaders in their field, and:

- is flexible and responsive, and able to adapt the service best to meet clients' needs
- is a learning organisation that reflects on its work and uses this information to challenge its own performance

- effectively engages clients and staff in this shared learning
- engages in partnership working at a strategic level to better meet the needs of clients, the service/organisation and commissioners
- demonstrates the achievement of shared outcomes as a result of effective partnership working
- demonstrates vision, leadership and creativity that influences practices beyond the boundaries of the service.

**Level B:** means that the service can evidence good practice, and:

- has policies and procedures in place that go beyond statutory requirements to embrace good practice, and that these are followed
- has staff that are confident to take the initiative, and work effectively with other agencies
- has clients meaningfully engaged at a service level
- Engages in partnership working at a service level to better meet the needs of clients and the service
- is working towards the achievement of shared outcomes at a service level
- challenges its own performance with internal auditing and the setting and monitoring of targets
- demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement.

**Level C:** means that the service meets, and is able to evidence, the required minimum standard but there is scope for improvement, and:

- complies with any statutory requirements
- has policies and procedures in place, and that these are followed
- has staff that understand and can explain the policies and procedures
- has clients who understand the nature of the service they are receiving
- engages in partnership working at a client level to better meet the needs of the individual

# ment Framework

- is working towards achievement of individual outcomes
- demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement.

## Policies and procedures

In the pilot QAF a number of objectives required policies and procedures to be reviewed every two years. Following feedback from the pilot, this has been revised to every three years.

## Scoring

The scoring of services in the refreshed QAF is based on averages of scores. Any service who receives a grade C score cannot achieve a grade A score. The scores are as follows:

Failure to reach level C on any standard / objective	▶	Failure to reach minimum standards
Level C on a majority of standards /objectives and no failure to reach level C	▶	Performance Level C
Level B or above for a majority of standards / objectives	▶	Performance Level B
Level A for the majority of standards/objectives and no level Cs	▶	Performance Level A

## Assessment and Support Planning

The new Assessment and Support Planning section has combined the two old objectives concerning Needs and Risk Assessment and Support Planning. This reduces the duplication of evidence that was produced in the old QAF.

The refreshed QAF focuses on support planning and risk assessments, and 'appropriate risk taking'. The concept of risk management has been made more explicit. Support planning should focus from the beginning on resettlement and move on.

## Security, health and safety

This objective has not undergone many significant changes. The main alteration focuses on health and safety to include the wider community. There have also been a number of legislative changes which can be found in the QAF guidance document. Providers should be aware that health and safety legislation will apply differently in accommodation based services and floating support services.

## Safeguarding and protection from abuse

The major change to the objective is that it now includes the safeguarding and protection of children, as well as vulnerable adults. There is also a stronger emphasis on multi-agency working. As legislation changes, the QAF will be updated to reflect this. For example, the extension of 'No Secrets' to include vulnerable adults.

The extent to which services are responsible for the safeguarding and protection of children depends on the type of service they are. The QAF identifies four types of services which come into contact with children. They are as follows:

- services where children are known to live
- services where children may live
- services where children may visit
- services where children neither live or visit, but clients may have access to children.

All services will have a stronger emphasis on multi agency working in relation to protection issues. Relevant services should show awareness of and engage in, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC)..

## Fair access, diversity and inclusion

The standard has been updated to take account of recent changes in legislation.

Policies and procedures in relation to equality and diversity should take into account all the statutory requirements, but should also cover other aspects such as dress or appearance.

The requirements in relation to Equalities Schemes and Equality Action Plans should be in proportion to the size of organisation. Further procurement guidance to local authorities indicates that it is good practice for them to pass on their equalities duties to any sub contractors.

The requirement of 'fair exit' from service has also been introduced. The concept of 'fair exit' is twofold. First, ensuring that services are terminated in accordance to the law, and being transparent in why they are terminated. Second, in short term services, this relates to ensuring that move on processes are fair and transparent, and both clients and staff are clear about what move-on options are available.

## Client involvement and empowerment

The client involvement and empowerment objective is new, combining the previous core objective C1.6 Complaints and the supplementary objectives relating to service user involvement (S1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4). The objective focuses on involving service users and supporting them to be provided with resources, which allow them to make informed decisions. For example, documents should be in an appropriate format to client needs.

The concept of client involvement runs throughout the QAF, services should try and involve clients at all levels, from an individual client level to service level and finally strategic level.

Refreshed QAF documents can be found on [spkweb.org.uk](http://spkweb.org.uk)

# QAF in detail: Core Objective 1: Assessment and Support Planning

Lucy Woodbine explains Core Objective 1 of the new Quality Assessment Framework

*"All clients receive an assessment of their support needs and any associated risks. All clients have an up-to-date support and risk management plan. Assessment and support planning procedures place clients' views at the centre, are managed by skilled staff and involve other professional and/or carers as appropriate."*

This objective has not had undergone many significant changes from the original QAF. But there has been a joining of the previous core objectives: C1.1 Needs and Risk Assessments and C1.2 Support Planning. Combining these two objectives removes the somewhat artificial split that was created by the old QAF, thereby reducing repetition of evidence. It recognises that the process of risk assessment and support planning work together. Identified risks always have a support element attached to them.

The unified objective contains five standards relating to assessment and support planning. When producing support plans and risk assessments, it is important that they relate to the service type and client group. For example, the risk and assessment and support plan for a very short term service

(less than 28 days) will not be the same as one for a long term service.

The standards are as follows:

1. The needs of applicants/clients and any inherent risks are assessed on a consistent and comprehensive basis prior to a service being offered, or very shortly afterwards, as appropriate to the needs of the client group.

All clients must have a comprehensive risk assessment prior to the service being offered, in order to ensure that the service is appropriate. The QAF also encourages services to work with risk and manage it, as opposed to imposing blanket exclusions. Further, commissioners need to recognise that, for some services, a prior assessment may not be possible or appropriate. For example, in emergency services such as women's refuges, the assessment and support plan should be carried out within the first few days of the client using the service.

All staff should be aware of, and know how to use the needs and risk assessment tool and ensure that it is appropriate to the client group. A tool developed with the clients would provide evidence of a level A or B service and would demonstrate that it was truly client

focused. Ensuring that feedback from both staff and residents is recorded and used also strengthens the needs and risk assessment tools.

2. All clients have an individual outcomes-focused support and risk management plans that address the needs and risks identified by the assessment process.

At Level C, the QAF requires all support plans to use SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound).

The standard also focuses on the need to ensure that support and risk management plans are outcomes focused. The support plans should look at how they relate to the St Andrew's outcomes<sup>1</sup>, which are:

- achieve economic wellbeing
- enjoy and achieve
- be healthy
- stay safe
- make a positive contribution.

Finally, all services should take account of any other support or care that the client may also be receiving and try to ensure that they work effectively with the other agencies. A Level A service would ensure that the support and risk management plan would complement any existing plans from other agencies, thereby reducing repetition of work and ensuring that the client receives the most effective support.

3. Needs/risk assessments and support/risk management plans are reviewed regularly on a consistent and systematic basis.

All needs and risk management plans must be reviewed at least annually. However, for short term services it would be more appropriate to update them more regularly. Staff carrying out support work should recognise if there is a change in the risks initially identified in the first risk assessment. During the first few months of service, the client's needs will become more apparent through the trust built up between the client and member of staff. Consequently, the clients risk assessment should be reviewed to recognise these needs. As well as the staff updating support and risk management plans, clients should be encouraged to update

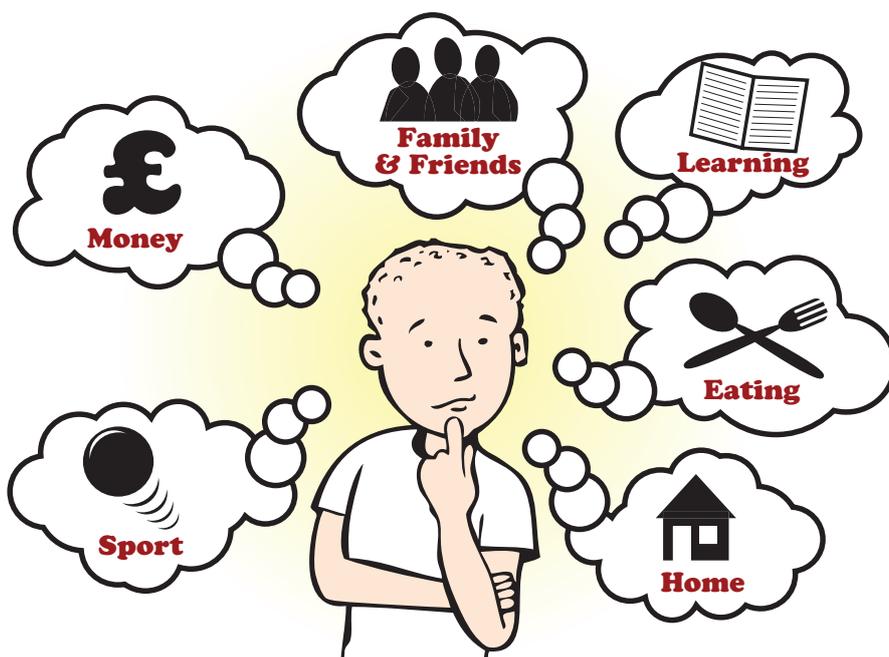


Figure 1: An example of an extract from a pictorial support plan for a learning disabilities service

the plans when they wish to. They should be given the opportunity to indicate a desire to change the plan and adapt the support needs identified.

4. Needs and risk assessment, support planning and reviews involve clients and take full account of their views, preferences and aspirations.

The needs and risk assessment and support planning should involve the client and ensure all their views are taken into account. At Level C, a service must ensure that clients' views are taken into account and that they have access to their support plan. These should be in a format that they understand and can relate to, such as:

- pictorial support plans (see figure 1)
- support plans using mind maps
- recorded support plans
- written support plans.

An example of a Level B service for this standard would be ensuring the support plan is person centred. The support and risk assessment plans should be appropriate to client needs and a document that the client can relate to and understand clearly. Where there is a support need that the service cannot provide, clients should be signposted to other agencies that can provide the necessary support.

5. Staff carrying out needs and risk assessments and negotiating support and risk management plans are competent to do so.

It is important that staff are aware of how to carry out needs and risk assessments. All staff should be trained in needs and risk assessment and support planning. Formal course materials would be evidence of training. The use of supervision, team meetings and staff shadowing can also evidence training.

Give us your examples of good practice

Sitra is building up a library of assessment and support planning good practice as evidence for the QAF. If you have any examples of good practice that you would like to share please send it to either Lucy Woodbine at [lucyw@sitra.org](mailto:lucyw@sitra.org) or at [helpline@sitra.org](mailto:helpline@sitra.org)

<sup>1</sup> [www.spclientrecord.org.uk](http://www.spclientrecord.org.uk)

Sitra training

Sitra were fundamental in drafting, piloting and reviewing the refreshed QAF. You can benefit from the expertise we've acquired by attending one of our QAF courses or arranging for training inhouse. See [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) for more details.

# Sitra courses are also available inhouse

Sitra can help you enhance staff performance and career development opportunities, achieve best practice, and attract and retain valuable staff.



If you have 6 or more staff requiring training on a particular topic, it may be more economical to arrange the training at your venue. The majority of the courses listed in this guide, plus many more can be tailored for your needs.

Please download the inhouse flyer from the website [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) for a full list of available courses or email [kerilee@sitra.org](mailto:kerilee@sitra.org)

## Inhouse training offers you:

- Control over course subject, content and style
- Flexibility to select when and where courses take place
- Personalised training tailored to your service area, learning preferences and experience
- Experienced trainers with in depth knowledge of the subject areas
- Cost effective training for a fraction of the price of group bookings on a public course
- Greater input into course content, in order to meet the needs of your organisation, staff and service users.
- Better interaction and effective learning - because all relevant employees will learn together, there is more scope for them to interact, which can lead to more effective learning during and after the course.

## Sitra training - the cost effective, flexible option to training your staff team

### Shared training

Only a few staff members to train? Why not offer places on your inhouse course to local partners to encourage networking and share the cost?

As lead client you can sell places on to other organisations, so sharing costs and cutting travel times for staff.

We'd be happy to talk to you about how you can set this up.

Get in touch by emailing [kerilee@sitra.org](mailto:kerilee@sitra.org)

*"We have used some of the same Sitra trainers for many years which is an indication of how much we value them. It has always been possible to discuss the content of the inhouse training with the trainer to ensure that it is geared specifically for our own needs."*

*"It encouraged lots of inter organisational discussion which enabled sharing of tips and knowledge."*

## Contact us For more information, contact Sitra on 020 7793 4713

Sitra is part funded by Communities and Local Government (CLG).





# Security, health and safety

Lucy Woodbine looks at objective C1.2 of the refreshed QAF.

There have not been many significant changes in this objective from the original QAF. The objective states: “The security, health and safety of all individual clients, staff and the wider community are protected.”

The objective comprises of three standards. The few significant changes include the updated list of relevant legislation and the inclusion of the wider community.

**C1.2.1 There is a health and safety policy which has been reviewed in the last three years and is in accordance with current legislation**

It must be noted that some of the legislation places responsibility on the landlord, who may not be the support provider. Also, not all of the legislation listed is applicable to floating support services. However, all providers need to comply with the whole list for any building of which they are manager.

One area that providers are struggling with is the smoke-free legislation introduced in 2006 and 2007. A number of providers have implemented it but have not updated their written policies and

procedures. It is important that both accommodation-based services and floating support services ensure that they minimise the exposure of staff to smoke.<sup>1</sup>

More generally, providers and local authority teams should ensure that they are clear about how the health and safety legislation relates to their services. It is advisable to seek specialist advice in health and safety, as this is such a complicated area of the law.

C1.2.1 also requires providers to induct and consult all staff in health and safety procedures.

**C1.2.2 The service has a co-ordinated approach to assessing and managing security, health and safety risks that potentially affect all clients, staff and the wider community**

This aspect of the standard focuses on ensuring that the service is co-ordinated in its approach to risk assessment. It is important that

## Legislation which providers must comply with in their policy and procedures

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
- Consumer Protection Act 1987
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended in 1993)
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation Regulations 1990 (as amended 2006) and local HMO regulations
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002)
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Plugs and Sockets etc. (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended 2005)
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
- Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 (as amended 2005 and 2006)
- Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 2002
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006
- Smoke-free (Exemptions and Vehicles) Regulations 2007
- Smoke-free (Signs) Regulations 2007
- Smoke-free (Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.

**Note:** The list is taken from *Using the QAF*, April 2009, CLG/Sitra page 27.

the service assesses the risks that it poses *to* the wider community, and also identifies risks *from* the wider community. Young people's services, for example, should assess how they interact with the community at large. If there is increased perceived anti-social behaviour around the service, this should be addressed. Joint working with the local police would demonstrate an element of work with the wider community. More generally, all services need to carry out an annual premises risk assessment. The regular internal health and safety checks provide a good opportunity for client involvement, but if clients are involved in the checks, providers must ensure that they are fully trained.

The standard also requires all services to have a lone working policy – and a procedure that is followed. This is another area which some services appear to have found challenging. It is important that there are things in place to minimise the risk to lone workers. Floating support services should ensure that their lone working policy and procedure is robust. Examples of good lone working practice include the use of a buddy system, on call rotas and using electronic diaries.

Front line staff should be involved in the development of lone working policies and procedures – to ensure that they are aware of the need for the procedures and can ensure that it fits in with their day to day work.

Finally, the standard has a requirement at level A of a 'dynamic approach' to risk assessment. This dynamic approach encapsulates the idea that services should be pro-active about risks, as opposed to just reacting to them. For example, some sheltered services ban

rugs and silk flowers, as rugs pose a 'slip, trip and fall' hazard, while silk flowers are a fire hazard. A dynamic approach would be managing these risks as opposed to enforcing a blanket ban.

### **C1.1.3 There are appropriate arrangements to enable clients to access help in crisis or emergency**

This part of the standard assesses what is in place for clients in a crisis or emergency. All services must have out-of-hours support arrangements. For those services who are funded for a set time, for example, Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, they need to ensure that information is provided to clients so that they can contact other services, such as an advice line and police, fire, and ambulance services. For those services that have out-of-hours arrangements, these should be tested regularly to ensure they work. Good practice would be to mock test the arrangements and/or involve clients in developing them.

At level B, one of the examples given is ensuring that there is a plan for dealing with any disruption in the service. This should include a business recovery plan for the service, for example, if the building had a fire or a flood or if staff were unable to work in the service (some Supporting People contracts require this as a minimum standard). As with the out of hours arrangements, it would be good practice to involve clients in the development of this.

More information on health and safety can be found on The Health and Safety Executives website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

1. Further guidance on the smoke free legislation can be found in "New smoking regulations", Nesa Muhammad and Caroline Barnett, *Sitra bulletin*, June 2007. It can be found in the Publications section of the Sitra website at [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) (under Sitra bulletin articles – June 2007).



# Safeguarding and protection from abuse

Lucy Woodbine looks at the role of the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (QAF).

“There is a commitment to safeguarding the welfare of adults and children using or visiting the service and to working in partnership to protect vulnerable groups from abuse.” The standard on Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse (C1.1.3) has been significantly revised in the new QAF. For instance, all services now have a duty to safeguard and protect children. However, the level of protection should be proportional to the type of service and the risks assessed in the service. Any service that supports a person who has a history of offences against children should manage this risk and support the client appropriately.

There are four types of service where children may be affected:

- Services where children are known to live.
- Services where children may live.
- Services where children may visit.
- Services where children neither live nor visit, but clients may have access.

In the first category are services such as women's refuges and teenage parent accommodation. These services need to have a designated lead on child protection, that is part of a job role as opposed to an entire job. The second and third service categories are required to review their policies and procedures to reflect what they would do if a child protection issue arose. The final service grouping, 'Services where children neither live nor visit, but clients may have access' are likely, by their very nature, to have very strong child protection policies.

The majority of services fall into the second and third groups. These services, in their policies and procedures, should address:

- Who takes responsibility for a child when they are in the service?
- How do clients, staff and external organisations alert any safeguarding or protection issues?
- How are these issues dealt with within the organisation?

However, it is advisable that all services think about how they interact with children and ensure that there are procedures in place to address safeguarding and protection issues.

The five standards in the objective are as follows:

**1) There are robust policies and procedures for safeguarding and protecting adults and children that are less than three years old and in accordance with current legislation.**

It is important that all policies and procedures are updated in accordance with current legislation. Both providers and the Supporting People team have a responsibility to keep up to date with changes in legislation. For example, the introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority over the next two years will change legislation surrounding child and adult protection.

It is required that all policies and procedures address safeguarding of both adults and children. At QAF level C, the lone working risk assessments need to also address the increased risks to clients. For example, they should look at how a client could alert a manager of abuse and whether they know how to.

An example of a QAF level B under this standard would be a service which looks at

its policies and procedures both at an organisational level and at a service level. It should develop local approaches which feed into the organisational policies. The policies and procedures should also address disincentives to reporting abuse. For example, if a client feels that they wish to be able to report the abuse anonymously, there should be procedures in place to enable this.

**2) Staff are aware of policies and procedures and their practice both safeguards clients and children and promotes understanding of abuse.**

It is important that all staff understand what abuse is and know how to report it. Front line support workers should be clear about whom they would report abuse to and how. They should also be able to explain how they would support both victims of abuse and suspected perpetrators.

All staff should be trained and inducted on safeguarding and protection. Furthermore, following any incidents of safeguarding and protection, it is good practice to review the policies and procedures and ensure that any training issues are addressed.

For organisations that have not experienced any safeguarding issues, it would be good practice to work with staff to test their knowledge. Spending time in team meetings and supervisions discussing safeguarding and protection is also good practice. It is also important that staff are aware that abuse extends beyond physical and sexual abuse, and can also include neglect and emotional and financial abuse.

The above standard also encompasses volunteers, who also need to be aware of how to report abuse and promote an understanding of what abuse is.

A QAF level B example of training in safeguarding and protection from abuse would be an organisation who trains all staff and volunteers in this area using both front line staff and clients to deliver the training.

**3) Staff are made aware of and understands their professional boundaries and their practice reflects this.**

This standard focuses on the need for staff to understand their professional boundaries and reflect this in practice. Level C of the QAF in this standard requires that a Code of Conduct (or similar document) makes clear appropriate boundaries for staff and volunteers. Good practice would be to draw up this code of conduct in conjunction with clients and front line staff.

Providers should ensure that all staff are clear about their professional boundaries and that they can explain them. Evidence of this may be around past incidents, such as a

client asking a member of staff for money and the member of staff explaining how they handled the situation. Evidence will also be gleaned from clients around how they understand their relationship with members of staff.

**4) Clients understand what abuse is and know how to report concerns**

QAF level C requires that all clients know who they can report abuse to. As well as knowing who to report to inside the organisation, they need to know who to report to on the outside.

Services also need to think about their internal reporting mechanisms. For example, in a floating support service, clients should be able to contact their key workers' manager in order to report concerns, and they should also be aware of who their key worker works for.

In terms of reporting concerns outside the organisation, clients should be able to suggest who they would contact with concerns. Examples include social services, the Supporting People team or another person who works closely with them. The outside contact should be a professional as opposed to a friend or family member.

**5) The service is committed to participating in a multi-agency approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.**

This standard places a stronger emphasis on multi agency working than the last QAF did. Services need to show that they would know how to access multi-agency working in response to specific safeguarding issues. Level B services need to demonstrate how the service engages in partnership working surrounding safeguarding and protection. At Level A, services would look at organisational involvement in local safeguarding arrangements. Such an organisation may take a lead in an area of safeguarding locally. They will also have involvement from clients regarding local multi-agency working.

The area of safeguarding and protection will be changing over the next few years and it is important that providers and commissioners remain up to date. At the minimum, organisations need to ensure that all staff and clients are aware of safeguarding and protection, and know how to report concerns. If an organisation has not had any concerns in practice, they need to demonstrate that they have reviewed whether there are inhibitors surrounding reporting concerns, and that they are clear as to what they would do if one were to arise.

# Fair access, diversity and inclusion

Lucy Woodbine examines this QAF objective in detail.

“There is a demonstrable commitment to fair access, fair exit, diversity and inclusion. The service acts within the law and ensures clients are well-informed about their rights and responsibilities.”

The objective consists of the following three standards:

1. Fair access, fair exit, diversity and inclusion are embedded within the culture of the service and there is demonstrable promotion of the policies.
2. The assessment and allocations process have been reviewed in the last three years and ensure fair access to the service.
3. There is a commitment to ensuring fair exit from the service.

Of the five refreshed QAF objectives, Fair Access has been the area which many providers have struggled with. The objective has not undergone many significant changes - but the language surrounding it has changed, which has caused difficulty. Furthermore, there have been questions surrounding how to meet a person's “cultural needs”.

**Standard 1: Fair access, fair exit, diversity and inclusion are embedded within the culture of the service and there is demonstrable promotion of the policies.**

The standard focuses on the need for policies and procedures, the following legislation should be part of equality and diversity policy and procedures:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976 (amended 2000 and 2003)
- Disability Discrimination Act (1995) (amended 2005)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination)

Regulations 2005

- Equality Act 2006
- Race and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

Policies and procedures should also cover other reasons for which people may suffer discrimination, for example, appearance or dress. As well as having policies and procedures in place, services and organisations need to demonstrate that the concepts of equality and diversity are embedded within the organisation.

At level C, C1.4.1 there is a requirement that:

“Clients confirm that they are supported to meet their cultural needs and are able to observe their religious and cultural customs.”

The concept of cultural needs should be regarded as “what does a person need to lead their life in the way they want?” For example, is it important to them to eat a certain food or follow their religious needs? Cultural needs can also be viewed more widely, linking to the personalisation agenda and ensuring that clients are supported to follow their needs. An example often given is helping a client to take part in a certain sport or to support a certain sports team.

The standard also requires all services to have an Equalities Scheme and Action plan. This replaces the requirement in the old QAF for a “documented plan for ensuring equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.” Evidence should centre on who is accessing and using the service and whether it is meeting the needs of the community. The action plan should look at how the service can ensure greater access and whether the service meets the needs of those using it.

**Standard 2: The assessment and allocations processes have been reviewed in the last three years and ensure fair access to the service**

Providers need to ensure that clients can access the service. There should be a leaflet or publicity which tells potential applicants about the service. This publicity needs to be

in a format appropriate for clients, for example, translated documents, pictorial or easy read documents.

At QAF level C, services should inform unsuccessful applicants of the reason for lack of success in their application and sign post them to appropriate agencies. There are examples of services supporting clients to access other provision – this would be good evidence to demonstrate multi-agency working.

**Standard 3: There is a commitment to fair exit from the service**

The standard includes a new concept of ‘fair exit’ which has two elements to it:

1. Ensuring that the service is terminated in accordance with the law, and wherever possible good practice. In accommodation based services this is centred around the ending of tenancies and licences – are they ended correctly and is the correct occupancy agreement used? While in floating support services the issues are around the transparency in how cases are closed and what arrangements are put in place to close the case. This includes situations where clients do not want the case closed.
2. In short-term accommodation based accommodation based services, move on should be fair and transparent. It needs to ensure that staff and clients are clear about what move on options there are, who can access them and when, and how to apply. The move on expectation only applies to short term accommodation.

For longer term services, it would be good practice for organisations to think about what they would do if a clients needs change - for example, if a client needs to move to registered care.

Much of the evidence around Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion links to the Assessment and Support Planning part of the QAF. The references to legislation relating to equality and diversity will be amended following the implementation of the Single Equalities Bill.

# Client involvement and the new regulatory framework

From an original photograph by Lisa Welling

Lucy Woodbine reports

Over the last years, there have been significant changes in both the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) and monitoring of Supporting People funded services in general. The refreshed QAF places client involvement at the centre of the monitoring process. Providers who are also Registered Social Landlords (or their agents) will need to demonstrate that they truly are involving tenants. This is now a requirement of their regulatory body, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

Specifically, the new QAF has introduced a whole new objective focusing on client involvement.

## Client involvement and empowerment

“There is a commitment to empowering clients and supporting their independence. Clients are well informed so that they can communicate their needs and views and make informed choices. Clients are consulted about services provided and are offered opportunities to be involved in their running. Clients are empowered in their engagement in the wider community and the development of social networks.”

This is QAF objective C1.5, which comprises of five standards. They ensure that client involvement is considered across the entire service and throughout the client's experience of it. Any service which wishes to achieve level A in the new QAF will have to demonstrate real, significant client involvement.

Feedback from development of this objective has resulted in the following concern – “how do we involve our clients when they do not wish to be involved?”

For many services, this is a genuine barrier, as clients are quite entitled to exercise this choice. This has to be recognised by providers and contracts officers. However, services need to consider why clients are not involved and also consider what they

understand by client involvement.

## Are clients involved at all levels of the service?

At level C of the QAF, clients should be involved in their support planning and risk assessment. Their support plan should be person centred and produced in a manner to which they can relate. Examples of accessible support plans are pictorial plans or plans written in plain English. For accommodation based services, clients should be able to treat their room as their home and decorate it as they wish.

A level B service will have client involvement at the service, as well as the support planning, level. Clients should be involved in developing local policies and procedures, for example, house rules, emergency contact sheets or key working practices. Clients should also have the opportunity for input into the service itself, for example, through health and safety checks, or developing leaflets and information. The service should be responsive to different client needs and aspirations.

Finally, at level A, services should have clients involved strategically in the organisation. Examples of this would be client involvement at a board or management committee level. A level A service would also have clients involved in

recruitment and selection of staff. The service will be able to demonstrate that there is client involvement at all levels and a choice of ways for clients to be involved.

## Personalisation and choice

There is a clear link here to the personalisation agenda. At the service level, there should be a diversity of client involvement tools. Clients should be involved in a variety of ways, by a range of means, from service meetings to social events, to feedback channels and comments and complaints. Finally, clients will be strategically involved in the service and possibly outside of it.

The best services will have clients feeding into and developing policy and procedure and clients on the board or management committee where appropriate and possible. To achieve a level A assessment, these board or management committee representatives would need to also demonstrate how they relate to fellow clients and how information is fed up and down. It is important to remember that they are representing the service or client group as opposed to themselves. They may also get involved in influencing commissioners.

Many services are involving clients in practice - but their evidence of involvement is sometimes not clear. It is important that involvement is recorded and evidenced. However, evidence can also be gleaned by assessors from discussion with staff and clients surrounding the ethos of the organisation and from visiting the service and establishing whether clients really do have the opportunity to be involved. At the highest quality levels, involvement should be viewed as far wider than client presence on committees.

# QAF lite

Lucy Woodbine reports on issues for for small providers, sole traders and community alarm (non visiting) services. Following the refresh of the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) Lite in June 2009, Sitra has received a number of queries from providers.

The QAF Lite covers services:

- Delivered by small providers. That is, those employing no more than one full-time equivalent member of support staff; and/or
- Provided at low weekly Supporting People rates<sup>1</sup> or
- Community alarm services which are telephone-based alarm and do not include the provision of visiting support staff as part of the service or
- Sole traders who do not employ staff to deliver housing support, are not working for a charity, housing association, limited company or other type of organisation and are not members of the National Association of Adult Placement Services (NAAPS). Examples of sole traders are supported lodgings or resident adult carers.

It is for use by administering authorities and providers as part of the quality assessment process. Its aim is to aid service improvement – not to stifle innovation or emerging good practice.

The QAF Lite has been revised alongside the refreshed QAF (2009). As with the Refreshed QAF, the standards have been raised to drive up quality and to ensure that services evolve and meet the changing needs and aspirations of clients. The QAF Lite has also been revised to ensure that it complements the main QAF. Standards from level C of the QAF have provided the basis for the QAF Lite. Services, who wish to demonstrate that they meet levels A or B should use the main QAF to evidence this. Use of the QAF Lite remains non mandatory for authorities.

The QAF Lite assesses services using the same core objectives as the QAF Refresh:

- C1.1 Assessment and support planning
- C1.2 Security, health and safety
- C1.3 Safeguarding and protection from abuse
- C1.4 Fair access, diversity and inclusion

- C1.5 Client involvement and empowerment.

Assessments under the QAF Lite, should be carried out with a lighter touch than the main QAF. The evidence provided for the QAF Lite should focus on:

- **Does the provider have policies and procedures in place?**

These policies and procedures must be written, followed, and reviewed on a consistent basis, at least every three years.

- **Do the staff understand what the service is providing?**

- **Do clients know what the service offers?**

For example, they will be receiving the service for x amount of time and will receive support y hours/days a week.

- **Do all clients have files with relevant information?**

- **There are defined outcomes from the service**

For example, the service aims to support the client to maintain their independence or, the service aims to signpost the client to other services.

- **The service carries out health and safety checks and follows them up**

- **The service is clear about access to the service and fair exit from the service**

- **The service is aware of and safeguards and protects both vulnerable adults and children**

- **Clients know how to and have an opportunity to complain about the service.**

Much of the QAF Lite assessment can be established through a desktop review of the policies and procedures of the service. However, there is a need to visit the service and speak to clients and the provider. In terms of community alarm non visiting services, it is advisable to speak to the community alarm provider and the support provider to ensure that information is being shared.

The QAF Lite and guidance can be found on [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk), links to it are also on the Sitra website at [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) (go to 'Policy and Public Affairs' and select the link for QAF Refresh 2009). If you have any queries regarding the QAF Lite, please contact us at [sitrahelpline@sitra.org](mailto:sitrahelpline@sitra.org)

<sup>1</sup> Low value contract will be defined by the local authority.

# The Quality Assessment Framework (QAF): Frequently Asked Questions

To keep our members further informed of updates from the QAF, we are publishing the most common QAF FAQ's we receive via our helpline and training courses.

## Which services does the QAF Lite cover?

The QAF Lite was refreshed in June 2009 and can be found on [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk). It covers small providers, sole traders and non visiting community alarm services. Community alarm services with a visiting element will be covered under the main QAF.

## How do you validate visiting community alarm services using the main QAF?

We would suggest that a light touch use of the main QAF should be used for visiting community alarm services. Administering authorities should discuss with providers which would be appropriate for the service.

## Has the QAF for Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) been revised?

The QAF for HIAs has not been revised and there are no plans to revise it.

## Have any other codes/standards been passported through the QAF?

The Centre for Housing and Support (CHS) Code of Practice for Sheltered Housing has been passported to level B of the new QAF. We are working with two other codes currently regarding their passports.

## In regards to C1.4.1 what is the difference between an 'Equality Scheme', 'Equality Action Plan' and 'Equality Impact Assessment'?

Level C of the QAF requires an 'Equality Scheme' and 'Equality Action Plan', while an 'Equality Impact Assessment' is an example of a level B service.

**Equality scheme:** the policies and procedures which are in the place to ensure anti-discriminatory practice and equality of opportunity for all.

**Equality Action plan:** this has two parts, firstly, the collection of equalities data, and, secondly, reviews of the equalities data to address gaps or weaknesses in provision of services. The action plan should look at whether the service really ensures equal access to services and provision of services.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** this is an example of level B. Providers who wish to meet level B do not necessarily have to show they have completed equality impact assessments. An alternative example would be fine if it demonstrated good practice for the standard.

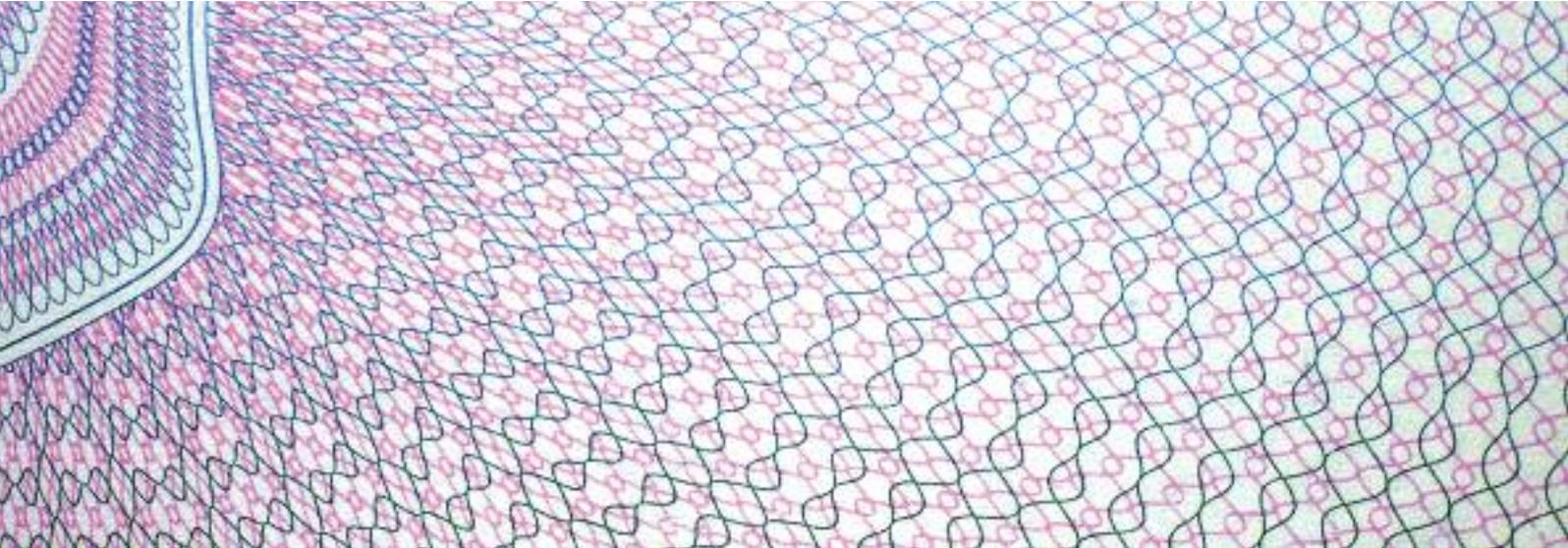
Equality impact assessments should be used to assess a policy, service or function to establish whether it unfairly impacts on any group. They are good practice to carry out and offer an opportunity to assess the impact of the providers work on the groups they work with and aim to work with. Guidance on how to carry out an equality impact assessment can be found on the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) website at [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

If you have any queries regarding the QAF please contact us at [sitrahelpline@sitra.org](mailto:sitrahelpline@sitra.org)



# QAF:FAQ

# What is passporting?



Lucy Woodbine considers an important aspect of the QAF.

Passporting of alternative codes and standards has always been a feature of the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). It allows local authorities to decide whether they wish to assess a service under the QAF or chose an appropriate alternative they see as compatible with it.

Where an alternative framework, such as the one developed by the Centre for Housing and Support (CHS) for sheltered housing, is used to fulfil QAF requirements (instead of using the QAF itself) this is called “passporting”. The detailed passporting arrangements vary between the various alternative codes deemed suitable.

QAF		CHS Code of Practice standard
Standard	Essential requirements (C) or Indicative evidence (A / B)	Evidence required
<p>C1.1.1</p> <p>The needs of applicants / clients and any inherent risks are assessed on a consistent and comprehensive basis prior to a service being offered, or very shortly afterwards as appropriate to the needs of the client group.</p>	<p>Performance Level C</p> <p>The needs and risk assessment policy and procedure is written down and reviewed in response to changing legislative or contractual requirements and at least every three years.</p>	<p>Standard 2: Policy and Legislation</p> <p>2.1 All key policies and procedures are up to date.</p> <p>3. Needs assessment/support planning</p> <p>4. Risk Assessment in relation to individual service users</p> <p>2.3 Policies and procedures are formally reviewed at least every three years.</p> <p>a. All policies and procedures are formally reviewed at least every three years (or in response to a significant change, for example, legislative change, change in contractual requirements, organisation restructure or change to model of service delivery) and revised where necessary. Policies and procedures should be dated and dates of reviews noted.</p>

## Is the passport mandatory?

Decisions whether to passport various alternative codes or not will be made by the local authority. As with the QAF itself, passporting is non mandatory. Sitra would recommend that all local authorities decide whether they wish to passport or not and communicate this decision to providers

Sitra has mapped all the alternative codes on to the QAF and is happy that they require achievement of at least QAF level C. On the Sitra website and SPKWeb<sup>1</sup>, the mapping documents have been published, in order for authorities to assess whether they are happy with the read across.

## How is the decision made to passport?

Sitra will assess all documents which are submitted to us as potential passports. We look at how the code reads across to the QAF, assessing whether there are comparable standards. For an example, see the chart opposite, from the Centre for Housing and Support's framework demonstrates that their system meets the first part of QAF standard C1.1.1. It explains their requirement for policies and procedures to be in place, and for them to be reviewed every three years. It also requires that that policies and procedures are checked and dated.

We also check how the codes are assessed. It is important that anything which is passported is as rigorous as the QAF in its application. For example, both the CHS and Telecare Services Authority codes are assessed by external inspectorates, who use an evidence based approach to their inspections. As with the QAF, they do not automatically grant compliance with the codes. Evidence has to be produced for the inspectors to ensure that that they are happy that the services are sticking to the codes in place.

## What are the advantages of passports?

The passported documents allow commissioners and providers to cut down on paperwork. We would advise that providers and commissioners assess whether they are happy using a particular passport and if so, how to use it. The passporting arrangements allow Supporting People teams to have access to expertise that they may not necessarily have.

## How have passports been used?

The use of the passported documents has varied between local authorities. Some local authorities have chosen to passport the entire service and not carry out a validation visit. Others have chosen to use the passport as a light touch assessment of services. Therefore, they will passport services on paper but may back this up with a visit where necessary. It is important that administering authorities do visit and assess at least some services to understand what they are funding.

## Which codes have been passported?

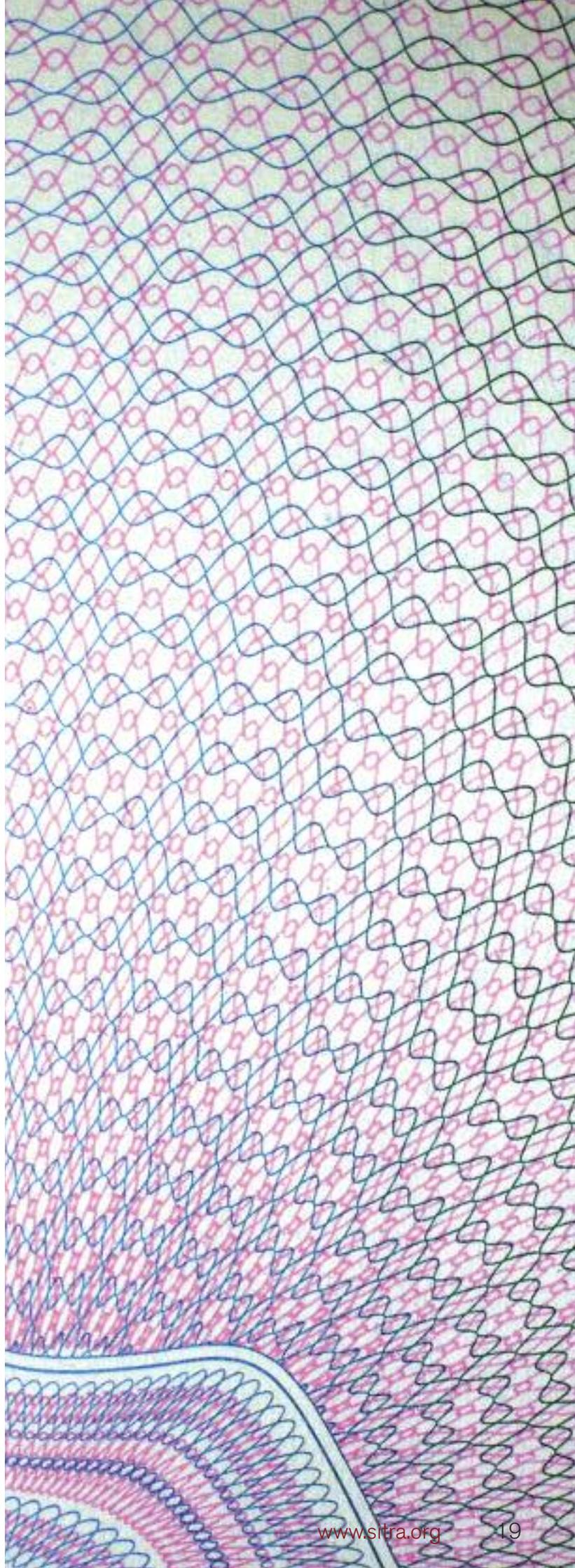
The Centre for Housing and Support's Code of Practice has been passported to level B of the refreshed QAF, for long term accommodation based services only.

The Telecare Services Authority is currently seeking a passport

The Foyer Federation is seeking a passport.

If you have any further queries about QAF passporting, please contact Lucy Woodbine, [lucyw@sitra.org](mailto:lucyw@sitra.org)

<sup>1</sup> See the QAF pages on the Sitra website at [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org) or visit the SPKweb at [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk)



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