Service Quality Standards (SQSs) and Criteria

Principle 1 : Clearly Define the Purposes and Objectives of the Service and Make its Mode of Delivery Transparent to the Public

The purpose and objectives of the service should be clearly defined and its mode of operations transparent for the benefit of staff, existing and potential service users, and the general community.

SQS 1 The service unit ensures that a clear description of its purpose, objectives and mode of service delivery is publicly available.

1.1 The service unit has an up-to-date handbook, information leaflet or brochure describing its purpose, objectives, target group, approach to service delivery and service entry and leaving mechanisms.

1.2 The service description is in a user-friendly language and is accessible to potential service users, staff and members of the community (depending on the nature of the service and its target service users, this may necessitate the information being available in more than one language; being in multimedia and/or being explained to service users on an individual basis).

1.3 Where appropriate, the service unit should make available its service description to potential service users, staff, and relevant local services or community groups.

SQS 2 The service unit should review and update the documented policies and procedures describing how it will approach key service delivery issues.

2.1 The service unit has a mechanism to review and update its policies and procedures.

2.2 The service unit has a mechanism for obtaining service users and staff input in the process of reviewing and updating policies and procedures, as appropriate.

SQS 3 The service unit maintains accurate and current records of service operations and activities.

3.1 Accurate and current records of service operations and activities of the service unit are maintained.

3.2 Accurate and current statistical reports are produced for reporting to SWD.

3.3 Periodical statistics and reports on the service unit's performance are accessible to the public.

Principle 2 : Manage Resources Effectively with Flexibility, Innovation and Continuous Quality Improvement

The service unit should manage its resources effectively and in a manner consistent with flexibility, innovation and continuous improvement in the quality of service delivered to service users.

SQS 4 The roles and responsibilities of all staff, managers, the Management Committee and/or the Board or other decision-making bodies should be clearly defined.

4.1 Job description and duty statements which define roles, responsibilities and accountabilities in respect of all positions within the service unit are available.

4.2 Job description and duty statements form part of the information accessible to all staff, service users and other interested parties.

4.3 The roles, responsibilities and membership of governing board are clearly defined and documented.

4.4 The service unit has an organisation chart on notice board and/or websites, which depicts its overall structure, accountability relationships, and staffing establishment of LSG-subvented regular posts.

SQS 5 The service unit/agency implements effective staff recruitment, contracting, development, training, assessment, deployment and disciplinary practices.

5.1 The service unit/ agency has policies and procedures on staff (including part-time staff) recruitment, deployment and promotion, employment contracting and disciplinary actions, and such policies and procedures are accessible to staff.

5.2 The service unit/ agency has induction policy and procedures for new staff.

5.3 The service unit/agency provides on-going supervision for staff and conducts regular performance reviews/ appraisals for identifying areas for performance improvement and needs for ongoing training and development.

5.4 The service unit/agency has a training policy and a plan for staff training and development.

SQS 6 The service unit regularly plans, reviews and evaluates its own performance, and has an effective mechanism by which service users, staff and other interested parties can provide feedback on its performance.

6.1 The service unit develops and documents appropriate plans to guide its operations and provide a basis for evaluating its performance.

6.2 The service unit has policy and procedures for obtaining feedback from service users, staff and other interested parties on its performance and for responding to such feedback, and such policy and procedures are accessible to them**.**

6.3 Action is taken in response to performance / quality issues identified during review and evaluation processes.

SQS 7 The service unit implements policies and procedures to ensure effective financial management.

7.1 The service unit has procedures for developing and endorsing budgets.

7.2 The service unit has policy and procedures to manage financial resources and monitor financial performance.

7.3 The service unit has procedures to regularly consider opportunities for introducing efficiencies/containing cost.

SQS 8 The service unit complies with all relevant legal obligations.

8.1 The service unit is aware of all legislation which governs its operations and service delivery (including health and safety legislation, etc.).

8.2 The service unit has procedures to monitor its performance ensuring that it complies with relevant legislation and seeks legal advice if and when required.

SQS 9 The service unit takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it provides a safe physical environment for its staff and service users.

9.1 Fire, and other necessary safety equipment, is available and effectively maintained.

9.2 Staff and service users are made aware of procedures for responding to an emergency and fire drills are conducted on a regular basis, at least once every 12 months.

9.3 The service unit regularly reviews its immediate and broader environment to identify safety issues and ensures that appropriate strategies for managing them are developed and implemented.

9.4 A record is kept of any accidents or injuries involving staff and/or service users at the service unit and the manner of responding to such incidents.

9.5 If the service unit is involved in transporting service users, all relevant road and traffic safety precautions are taken.

9.6 The service unit ensures that any service equipment is properly maintained and, where appropriate, is used under proper supervision.

Principle 3 : Identify and Respond to Specific Service Users' Needs

The service unit should identify and respond to specific service users' needs.

SQS 10 The service unit ensures that service users have clear and accurate information about how to enter and leave the service.

10.1 The service unit has policies and procedures in relation to entering and leaving the service and they are accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties.

10.2 The entry policy is non-discriminatory and clearly identifies the target group for service delivery and the criteria for determining priority for entry.

10.3 Where an applicant is refused entry to a service, the service unit provides the applicant with reasons for the decision and, where appropriate, refers the applicant to an alternative service unit.

SQS 11 The service unit has a planned approach to assessing and meeting service users' needs (whether the service user is an individual, family, group or community).

11.1 The service unit has policy and procedures in relation to assessing and meeting service users' needs, and they are accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties.

11.2 Service users, relevant staff, family members or other relevant personnel are consulted and, where appropriate, their views are incorporated in all stages of the assessment and planning process.

11.3 The service unit records assessment of service users' needs and plans as to how they will meet their needs, including goals, action identified and timeframes for achieving or reviewing plans.

11.4 Service users' records are regularly updated to reflect changing circumstances.

Principle 4 : Respect the Rights of Service Users

The service unit should respect the rights of the service users in all aspects of service operations and delivery.

SQS 12 The service unit respects the service users' right to make informed choices of the service they receive as far as practicable.

12.1 The service unit has policy and procedures to provide service users with timely information about operations which affect the services received by them.

12.2 The service unit has policy and procedures for providing service users with opportunities, if appropriate, to make informed choices and decisions about the services they receive, and such policy and procedures are accessible to them.

SQS 13 The service unit respects the service users' rights in relation to private property.

13.1 The service unit has policy and procedures for ensuring that service users' rights in relation to private property are being respected, and the policy and procedures are accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties.

13.2 Where appropriate, the service unit provides service users with the opportunity to keep private property in a secure place, or informs service users of the risks to their personal property.

13.3 Where the service unit has any responsibilities for collecting and/or managing the service users' money and other valuables, appropriate procedures and controls exist and are adhered to.

SQS 14 The service unit respects the service users' rights for privacy and confidentiality.

14.1 The service unit has policy and procedures, where practicable, for ensuring that the privacy and dignity of individual service users are being respected, and the policy and procedures are accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties.

14.2 The service unit ensures that any personal care activities which may be required are conducted, where practicable, in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of individual service users.

14.3 The service unit has policy and procedures for ensuring that service users' rights on confidentiality are being respected, and the policy and procedures are accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties.

SQS 15 Each service user and staff member is free to raise and have addressed, without fear of retribution, any complaints he or she may have regarding the agency or the service unit.

15.1 The service unit has policy and procedures in relation to handling complaints and they are accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties.

15.2 The service unit's procedures for handling complaints:

- include timeframes within which action will be taken in response to any complaints raised,
- identify necessary staff actions and specify who will be responsible for dealing with the complaints, and
- indicate how/when feedback will be provided to the service users.

15.3 Service users are informed of their rights to, and procedures involved in, raising complaints and having these addressed.

15.4 The service unit encourages and provides opportunities for service users to discuss service delivery issues and to freely raise any concerns they may have.

15.5 Any complaints raised and actions taken to resolve complaints are documented.

SQS 16 The service unit takes all reasonable steps to ensure that service users are free from abuse.

16.1 The service unit has policy and procedures for ensuring that service users' rights to freedom from verbal, physical and sexual abuse are being respected, and the policy and procedures are accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties.

16.2 Staff of the service unit are aware of its policy and procedures on protecting service users' rights to freedom from abuse.

16.3 Staff and service users are encouraged to raise any concerns about verbal, physical or sexual abuse and are given appropriate opportunities to do so.