



Mock QAF Validation

London Housing Trust

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Mike Ballard & Philippa Thomas
Sitra Associates

Sitra
Gateway House
8 Milverton Street
London
SE11 4AP

Contact:
Wendy Green
Consultancy Coordinator
020 7840 4441

Introduction

London Housing Trust (LHT) commissioned Sitra to work with them on their practice, policies and procedures, to enable them to understand the principles of the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework, and to deliver to and demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the QAF.

Sitra has 30 years' experience of providing technical support to providers and commissioners. This includes training and consultancy on Supporting People and the QAF (for which Sitra held the administration of this on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government), needs identification, care practice, housing management and development, together with associated activities such as personnel and staffing and financial management. The current focus on personalisation of services, co-production and outcomes focused support also forms the context of much of our current work.

Sitra conducts validation reviews for services wishing to understand how their services might be graded were a Supporting People QAF assessment be undertaken by a local authority's Supporting People/ASC team. We conduct reviews to the highest standards and remain mindful at all times of our overall responsibility for the QAF, conscious to never diminish its effectiveness, or the role it plays in maintaining quality across the sector. In 2010 Sitra was proud to be awarded 'guardianship' of the QAF by DCLG and hence became guardians of quality in housing support services.

Sitra therefore has strong credentials to conduct an independent review for organisations and has supported both providers, prospective providers and commissioners in conducting independent reviews to validate the quality of services and to help providers to raise the quality of their service.

Sitra has had close involvement with the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (QAF):

- Sitra has trained on the QAF since its inception in 2003
- Sitra was involved in the design of the original QAF and an integral part of the QAF 'Refresh' in 2009
- Sitra has been instrumental in maintaining quality in the sector since those early days, promoting best practice in support planning, needs and risk assessment and services that enhance and maintain independence

However, it is essential to stress that Sitra is not an awarding authority for QAF assessment; Sitra is not an approved assessor (It is not believed that any organisation outside of local authorities has this status), as only local authorities themselves can make an award against the QAF; however, based on Sitra's extensive experience in having the lead for, working with, and training on the QAF across the UK for the last 10 years we are well placed to conduct independent validations for members.

London Housing Trust

LHT provides accommodation for single homeless men and women, over 18, offering housing-related support services that are aimed at helping people live independently in their homes. LHT's description of their services can be found at:

<http://www.londonhousingtrust.org/services/support>

LHT has conducted a QAF self-assessment. They have a range of accommodation projects and service types and it is noted that their QAF self-assessment does not relate to any particular service; rather it is an overall general assessment of their policies, procedures and working practices. It is strongly recommended that to satisfy each local authority where a service exists, LHT undertake a self-assessment against the QAF for each of their housing related support services. A local authority would expect to see an individual QAF assessment for each group of services within a contract. Whilst there will be overarching corporate

policies and procedures, each QAF assessment should reflect local variations in service delivery and practice and compliance against each different contract to appropriately meet the different needs and risk profiles of the particular schemes and clients. This report considers the findings of the macro level assessment; it cannot validate a QAF level for any individual service.

Mike Ballard, a Sitra Associate, worked closely with LHT over an eight-month period in 2015 to improve LHT's understanding of the QAF, the principles of independent living, choice and control, that sit behind it, to ensure working practices reflected this and that policies and procedures underpinned this work. This work included staff and manager training, record keeping and document audit. Policies and procedures were amended and redrafted to reflect current practice and legislation

LHT subsequently prepared a self-assessment against the QAF and asked Sitra to review and grade it.

The assessment conducted by Mike Ballard comprised:

- A desk top validation of the completed QAF (first completed by LHT in December 2014)
- Subsequent reviews of additional drafts of the QAF self-assessment, based on the Associate's findings and on feedback and discussion with the Operations Director at LHT, Winsome Chambers
- Assessments of all the paperwork and documentation held by LHT including policies, procedures and client and staff files
- A review of the relevant policies and procedures submitted as evidence
- Interviews were held with all staff and an independently selected sample of clients

As a matter of good practice it was agreed that a second Sitra Associate, Philippa Thomas, who had not been involved with LHT's journey, would independently perform a desktop review of Mike Ballard's findings and validate the assessment of the mock-QAF gradings.

This was informed by:

- LHT's QAF submission
- The assessor, Mike Ballard's on-site and documentary review
- Confirmation of his testing of the statements
- Review of the safeguarding and equal opportunities policies on LHT's website
- Discussion between the two assessors following initial feedback.

The independent reviewer, Philippa Thomas, did not have sight of evidence referred to in the submission, relying on the original reviewer's findings, to avoid duplicating the process undertaken by Mike.

Based on initial findings, LHT undertook further work as suggested and final findings are as follows:

Overall Score and findings

Taking the five QAF Core Objectives together, LHT demonstrated evidence to Mike Ballard which is commensurate with achievement as follows:

Assessment & support planning: B

Security, health and safety: B

Safeguarding and prevention from abuse: C.

Fair access, diversity and inclusion: C

Client involvement and empowerment: B

Detailed gradings and commentary have been given to LHT with suggestions as to further work which could be undertaken.

Conclusion

LHT has undertaken a great deal of work in a relatively short space of time. In some areas this has already achieved good results; they are clearly on a journey of improvement. LHT has undertaken further training on safeguarding and protection from abuse. It is noted that a number of policies on their website have been or are in the process of being updated to ensure sound document control. We also advise them to add to their website a summary of the findings of their client survey and improvement actions taken in response to this survey.

We wish LHT well in embedding good practice and in continuously striving to attain at the highest levels.



Sitra

Sitra is the umbrella organisation committed to raising standards in the housing, care and support sector. We are a membership organisation and a registered charity with over 25 years' experience of offering practitioners a range of affordable policy, training & consultancy. For care & support providers, RSLs and managing agents we regularly provide advice, publications, training and consultancy on issues related to housing management, support and care including good consultation practice, policy and procedure reviews and good practice.

Our membership comprises some 450 practitioner organisations in the field of housing with care and support. Members are drawn from both providers and commissioners, and from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. We operate throughout England and have offices in London, Southampton and Birmingham.

Our members keep in touch through the monthly *Sitra Bulletin* which is widely recognised as a key source of technical information and policy development news throughout the supported housing sector.

We are recognised and consulted by central and local government departments for our expertise in housing, health and social care. Our in-depth work with service providers alongside our national level contribution to policy development makes for a strong combination.

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Sitra
32-36 Loman Street
CAN Mezzanine
London
SE1 0EH

020 7922 7878
www.sitra.org