

Human Services Quality Framework

Frequently Asked Questions: Transition to the HSQF

Community Services and Child and Family Support Services

This fact sheet is relevant to organisations that are delivering services funded by the department under the Community Services and/or Child and Family funding streams.

What is the Human Services Quality Framework?

The Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF) is the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (the department's) framework for assessing the quality of human services. It applies to organisations delivering services funded under a service agreement or other specified arrangement¹.

The HSQF was developed in collaboration with the non-government sector to maintain important safeguards for people using services while streamlining quality requirements. It incorporates:

- a set of quality standards, known as the Human Services Quality Standards (the standards) which cover the core elements of human service delivery
- an assessment process to measure the performance of service providers against the standards (assessment occurs at organisation level across all in-scope services)
- a continuous improvement framework, which supports the participation of people using services in quality improvement.

How is the HSQF being implemented?

The HSQF is being implemented in planned phases. The first phase of transition by organisations delivering disability and/or child protection placement services funded by the department commenced in 2013 and is now complete. Positive feedback has been received about the assessment process and the opportunities this offers for a holistic view of an organisation's systems and processes within a framework of continuous improvement.

The second phase of the HSQF roll-out commenced from 1 July 2015 and applies to organisations funded under the Child and Family and Community Services funding streams. The roll-out is being undertaken gradually, with flexible arrangements to support organisations to transition smoothly. Full implementation is expected to be complete by 1 January 2018.

How will my organisation be assessed against the standards?

The HSQF incorporates three methods of assessing and demonstrating compliance with the standards:

1. Certification under the HSQF – recognition that an organisation has met the requirements of the standards through a process of third-party audit by an accredited certification body.
2. Evidence of certification or accreditation against a set of industry standards under an alternative quality framework.
3. Self-assessment.

¹ Other specified arrangements include child protection placement services in-scope of licensing funded through Child Related Costs Placement and Support (CRC PAS), department delivered disability services and providers registered to deliver prescribed disability services in Queensland for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The method through which an organisation is required to demonstrate compliance will depend on the type and complexity of services provided, the vulnerability of people using their services and the amount of department investment.

Further information about the methods of assessment, how they apply at an organisation level and a small number of exceptions are outlined in the Human Services Quality Framework document available from the HSQF website at: www.communities.qld.gov.au/hsqf.

For further information about the type of assessment that applies to your organisation, please contact your regional Contract Officer or the HSQF team.

What are the timeframes for transition?

A summary of key timeframes for the different methods of assessment for demonstrating compliance with the standards are detailed below.

Method	Timeframes
In-scope of certification	<p>Your organisation will have up to 18 months from being notified of the requirement to achieve initial certification. In practice, this means that you will have up to 15 months to prepare for the initial independent third-party audit.</p> <p>Refer to the fact sheet '<i>FAQ - Certification at a glance</i>' for an overview of the process and stages.</p>
Evidence of alternative certification or accreditation	<p>Your organisation can submit a copy of your relevant accreditation or certification to the department at the time of negotiating a new service agreement or being notified of this requirement.</p> <p>Requests to recognise alternative accreditation are considered by the department on a case-by-case basis. If your accreditation is not accepted, the department will negotiate a timeframe for your organisation to meet HSQF requirements.</p>
Self-assessment	<p>Your organisation will have up to 18 months from being notified of the requirement to submit a completed self-assessment. A completed continuous improvement plan showing progress against the self-assessment is required 12 months later.</p>

Will my organisation have to rewrite our policies and procedures to align with the Human Services Quality Standards?

As the HSQF covers the core elements of human service delivery, policies and procedures which you may have used as evidence against previous standards, such as the Standards for Community Services or Home Care Standards are likely to still be relevant.

Comparison tools that map the alignment of the Human Services Quality Standards to a number of alternative quality standards/systems are available on the HSQF website at: www.communities.qld.gov.au/hsqf.

My organisation already has HSQF certification, how will new services transition to this certification cycle?

The department will negotiate individual transition arrangements based on current scheduled audit dates. Organisations are encouraged to contact their regional Contract Officer and their certification body to discuss transition options. For example, where an organisation has multiple child protection support services and/or community services to transition to independent audits, the option of a phased approach to transitioning particular service types or locations can be considered.

What support is available to assist organisations with the transition?

Information sessions and support

The department has partnered with the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) to provide a range of practical support to help organisations understand the HSQF and prepare for quality assessment activities. These supports include:

- A range of HSQF specific information, resources and templates on QCOSS's Community Door website.
- One-on-one support for organisations through a self-referral or referral from a departmental Contract Officer.

Further information is available from the QCOSS website or by telephoning (07) 3004 6900 or 1800 651 255 (toll-free, outside South East Queensland).

Resources and tools

The department has developed a range of resources and on-line tools to support implementation of the HSQF. These include:

- **User Guides – Certification and Self-Assessable Organisations** – Evidence guides outlining mandatory requirements that are common and/or specific to particular services and funding streams.
- **Guides to Self-Assessment and Continuous Improvement – Certification and Self-Assessable Organisations** - Information to assist service providers self-assess against the standards.
- **Self-Assessment Workbook and Continuous Improvement Plan** templates - Tools for reviewing processes and practices against the standards.
- **Key Milestone Guides – Certification and Self-Assessment** - Timeframes and key milestones for completing HSQF processes.
- **Quality Pathway Kit for Service Providers** - A series of information sheets on implementing and maintaining a quality system that meets the standards.

Separate versions of most of these resources are available for organisations required to achieve certification and organisations required to complete a self-assessment (only) against HSQF. Please make sure that you access the correct version that applies to your HSQF demonstration method.

For further information, please refer to the *HSQF Transition Plan – Community Services and Child and Family Support Services* available at on the HSQF website.

Audit costs - financial contributions

During 2017-18 as a transitional arrangement, the department will provide eligible organisations with one-off financial contributions towards the costs of completed audits. The contribution amount will reflect the type and scope of the audit undertaken and will be calculated using the approved HSQF audit pricing methodology.

In future, organisations delivering existing services under the Child and Family and Community Services funding streams will be expected to meet quality compliance and audit costs within their allocated funding. Further information about how this will be implemented will be provided to impacted organisations.

Financial contributions are not available to organisations that are required to demonstrate compliance with HSQF only through a self-assessment.

For further information on the eligibility criteria and pricing structure, please refer to the *FAQ-Quality Audit Financial Contributions* available on the HSQF website.

Further information

Further information about the Human Services Quality Framework is available from the HSQF team on (07) 3247 3072 or 1800 034 022 or hsqf@communities.qld.gov.au.

Resources, tools and implementation news are available at:

Department's website – www.communities.qld.gov.au/hsqf.

QCOSS – Community Door – <http://communitydoor.org.au/organisational-resources/quality-assurance/human-services-quality-framework>.