

Preparing for your Audit: Type I Agency

1. Introduction

This note is to help you prepare for audit by the National Standards Accreditation Service, developed to enable organisations to demonstrate compliance with the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice (The Standards). MBARC are the contractors and it is our auditors who will come to see you. The aim of the audit is to give agencies credit for the quality of the service they provide to clients and to provide a useful management tool for continuous improvement. The auditors can only do this on the basis of evidence available to them so your preparation for audit is really important.

2. On receipt of application

We conduct a desk top audit of the documents provided with your application as evidence that you comply with the required Standards for Type 1 Agencies. If there are any problems the auditor will get in touch with you to clarify any queries and help you update your application if necessary.

3. On site audit

The onsite audit is conducted by one auditor who will be on site for one day. The Standards for which you are required to provide evidence are listed in the Self Assessment Checklist, the Standards manual details the performance indicators that will evidence compliance of the management procedures and clearly defines the topic specific competence for both advisers and agencies which will be tested through the casework check.

The Auditor will:

- Undertake Case checks where possible on a sample of your agency's files which reflect both the volume of cases that have been undertaken over the last year and the areas of law in which your agency has applied for accreditation under the Standards. We require a representative sample of your cases so the auditors will be in touch with you about the sample before the visit. If as many Type 1 agencies you do not have case files or equivalent records our auditor will talk with members of staff involved in the delivery of the information about how they respond to some probable enquiries.
- Interview members of staff responsible for managing, delivering or providing administrative support to the advice service. The interviews

which typically last up to 45 minutes are used to test their understanding of: the agency's advice function; the topics on which they give advice; the agency's policies and procedures including general policies such as confidentiality, complaints and equalities as well as specific procedures such as case recording, case management and use of information resources.

- A Feedback Session will be held at the end of the visit with the coordinator/manager of the agency to go over initial observations from the audit. This cannot give you the final outcome of the audit.

4. During the visit

The auditor will need

- Somewhere to work - a desk or table, preferably somewhere relatively quiet
- Access to all the normal office facilities - somewhere to get make a drink, etc
- The agreed interviewees to be available - and briefed about the audit by yourselves
- Yourself or a nominated colleague to be on site and available to assist with finding people, records, and deal with the numerous queries which can arise

5. Audit Report

The auditor will prepare a draft report covering both the desk top and on site elements of the audit. The report will contain their findings, conclusions and recommendations. This draft report is passed to the Quality Manager for review and is then sent to you in draft. We aim to have the draft with you in within four weeks of completing the process audit visit.

We will ask you to check the report for any factual errors and discuss these or any other issues with the Quality Manager and aim to have the report agreed within two weeks of the draft being issued. You will receive final copies of the report, your report together with a summary are then sent to the Scottish Government. The summary reports will be publicly available.

6. Outcomes

The findings of the audit will that you are:

Accredited. You have met all the standards for management procedures and for adviser and agency competences for advice topics. It is possible for you to be accredited in some topics and not others. A certificate will be issued showing the topics for which you are accredited (presentations can be arranged). The accreditation date will be the date of the agreement of the final report (i.e. a maximum of eight weeks from the on site audit. Your accreditation stands for four years.

Not Accredited. You have not met all the Standards. The report will give you clear recommendations for action you need to take to achieve the Standard when and if you re-apply.

Not Yet Fully Compliant. You have not fully met all the Standards but the deficiencies should be able to be remedied within a short period and certainly within a maximum of six months. This allows a limited amount of scope for agencies who fully comply with almost all the Standards to achieve compliance without have to start from the beginning. A further audit process will be devised specifically to cover the Standards which were not met. This may involve a further visit.

7. Complaints, Appeals and Feedback

Your right to make a complaint about any aspect of the audit process is contained within our complaints procedure which will be sent to you separately.

If your agency is not happy with the auditor's findings and this cannot be resolved to your satisfaction, you have the right to appeal; further details will be provided upon delivery of your final report.

We always strive to keep our processes under review so that where improvements can be identified they are implemented. If you would like to offer us any views about your experience of the audit, we would like to hear from you. Please do not hesitate to contact us by telephone or email.

Confidentiality Note: It is necessary for auditors to review confidential documents such as case papers and staff supervision and training records. All MBARC's auditors are bound by our confidentiality procedures. The auditor will be happy to sign your own confidentiality statement in addition if you require that. Some agencies build consent for files to be audited into their case files and generally clients welcome this.

Contacts at MBARC
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