

Guidance To Auditors

3. Pre-Audit Visits 2009-2010

For the financial year 2009/2010, the Scottish Government is funding a programme of pre-audit visits to support agencies in applying for accreditation to the Standards. These will be visits by an auditor in addition to the support routinely given by the Information and Advice Standards Unit. I have tried to focus this on the areas which most often cause agencies to have problems complying with the Standards.

The following notes are intended to clarify what is and is not expected of you. Please note the timescale which is tighter than for audit reports (7. v. below)

1. The role is supporting the agency and not carrying out an audit.
2. Your visit will be for a day, with a half day to write the report. There will only be one of you (unless one of you is a trainee).
3. The agency will have had a menu of the things you might do and cannot do (appendix one attached - and not repeated here). How they use the time is up to them but in reality will be negotiable through the day. Different agencies will need different levels of support in different areas and you should change the emphasis of what you do accordingly. The menu is not an exclusive list and other issues may be of paramount importance to some agencies and should be addressed. Neither is it mandatory to cover all the areas proposed. The most effective use of a day's support is the guiding principle.
4. You should very strongly advise agencies to take advantage of the check on case recording because it so often is the cause of NYFC's or non-compliance.
5. You are not expected to check the accuracy of the advice which will probably not all be in your specialist areas - and you simply won't have time. You should check

- that you can read it, that it tells the story, records options, would enable another advisor to pick it up if necessary, etc.. You may want to have a discussion with generalist agencies applying at Type III.
6. You may or may not be part of the audit team who eventually go - if not, they will have your report.
 7. I anticipate the visit will take the following form...
 - i. 'phone call to introduce yourself and discuss form of visit - try to make sure senior administrator will be available for part of the day at least.
 - ii. Meeting to plan the day when you arrive - this may well include some of the topics on the menu.
 - iii. Meetings and case inspection.
 - iv. Informal feedback meeting - stress that this is not part of the audit and that you are offering a view on some of what they need to do both to comply with the Standards and prepare to be audited against the Standards. It should be made clear that the agency should closely refer to the Standards manual in preparation for audit; it is reference to this that informs agency and advisor guidance to successfully negotiate the audit process.
 - v. Write a brief report (on template at appendix 2). Please note that we have a very tight timescale - reports should come to me within a week of the visit. I then have two weeks to clarify with you if need be, agree it and get it to the agency.

The Big Don't - Do not venture an opinion on whether they will pass or not. Stick to the facts of what you have found and explain that the full audit will be in much more depth. You should however offer an opinion on whether the agency appears ready to apply. If not, then succinct but clear recommendations where actions are required prior to the agency presenting for full audit should conclude your report.

Stephen Rhind
Service Manager

9 November 2009

Appendix 1: Guidance to Agencies

The Pre Audit Quality of Advice Visit

The Pre-Audit Quality of Advice Visit does not form any part of your audit. It is advisory and forms part of your own preparation for the audit.

This note is to tell you what you can and cannot expect from a pre-audit visit. The visit can help you look at some of the areas we find that agencies most frequently struggle with but it cannot cover all of the Standards. It is to support you and is not a one size fits all visit. It can be tailored to your needs to emphasise some parts at the expense of others.

We strongly recommend that to get the most out of this visit, you include your senior administrator in some of the discussions on the day.

You Can Expect some or all of the following subject to available time:	You Cannot Expect:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A view of the legibility, clarity and coherence of your case recording. (Standards 4.4, 4.5)2. A view on the completeness and the adequacy of the depth of your case recording. (Standards 4.4, 4.5)3. A view on whether the records you show us are appropriate to the Type (I, II or III) of advice in which you are applying for accreditation - and a discussion of what the appropriate type for your service is in each topic (see below). (Standards 2.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A detailed check on the technical accuracy of the advice on the files you present.2. A detailed view on whether appropriate options have been offered to clients.3. A detailed assessment on the effectiveness of your file reviews and supervision in achieving the outcome the client.4. Any examination of your processes, procedures, office manual, etc. which will form the process part of your audit.5. Any indication of the likely outcome of

<p>generic and specific competences in Section 2 of the manual)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Discussion of your approach to allocating cases, file review, supervision and qualified advisors and supervisors. (Standards 4.6, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6 & 5.7) 5. Advice on suitable information resources (but not a final assessment of their current adequacy) (Standard 4.2) 6. Discussion of the adequacy of your system for managing key dates. (Standard 4.5) 7. A discussion of how best to find and present evidence for audit and how to use the Standards manual to support you. (all Standards) 8. Answer to queries about the audit process and interpretation of Quality of Advice related Standards to the extent that time permits. 9. A written follow up to your discussion listing the recommendations agreed on the day. (this list will be made available to the audit team who conduct your full audit) 	<p>an audit.</p>
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A note about Types

The audit service are very keen to emphasise that Type III accreditation is not somehow “better” than Type II. Agencies may do themselves a dis-service by applying for Type III

when what their remit requires and what their client group needs is the highly competent Type II advice which they actually give. Of course there is a need for specialist agencies to do representation and advocacy but not every agency is one or should be one and certainly not every agency is one or should be one in all advice topics they cover.

Appendix 2 - Report Template

Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers

Pre-Audit Support Visit Report

Date of Visit:		Auditor:	
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I hope the visit and this report will be very useful to you but I feel I must make it clear that it does not form part of your audit and you will still need to *demonstrate* your compliance with all the Standards at the appropriate type when the auditors make their formal visit - even where this report indicates that you are likely to comply without difficulty. This report highlights areas which need action to ensure your full compliance with the Standards which were apparent when we visited. The actual audit visit is, of course, much more comprehensive and may find issues which were not apparent on this visit. We do not publish this report, it is confidential to the audit service and yourselves. The audit team carrying out your actual audit will have access to it when they are planning the audit and during their visit.

I hope the whole accreditation process will be appositive one for your agency and that you have a successful audit.

Stephen Rhind
Service Manager, MBARC

10. Legibility, clarity and coherence of case recording (note: this does not include accuracy of advice):

(Standards 4.4, 4.5)

11. Completeness and the adequacy of the depth of case recording e.g. recording of
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<p>discussion of client options (note: this does not include accuracy of advice):</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Standards 4.4, 4.5)</p>
<p>12. Appropriateness of records to the Type (I, II or III) of advice - and note of any discussion about Type to be applied for:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Standards 2.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and Generic and Specific Competences in Section 2 of the manual)</p>
<p>13. Approach to allocating cases, adequacy of file review and supervision, suitably qualified advisors and supervisors (internal or external) to comply with the Standards at the Type to be applied for:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Standards 4.6, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6 & 5.7)</p>
<p>14. Information resources (current adequacy and advice given on improvements to comply with Standards):</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Standard 4.2)</p>
<p>15. Adequacy of your system for managing key dates.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Standard 4.5)</p>
<p>16. Presenting evidence and use the Standards manual (record who this was discussed with and briefly any key points or potential difficulties):</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(all Standards)</p>
<p>17. Other Issues:</p>

