

CLS Support Email Bulletin (Quality Mark No.6): an update

1 Reviewing the General Help Quality Mark Standard

- 1.1 The Supplier Development Group of the Legal Services Commission (LSC) has now reviewed the General Help Quality Mark Standard. The outcome of this review was that there was a need to make changes to the format and layout of the application pack in order to ensure greater clarity, as opposed to major changes to the actual requirements. It will be reformatted in the first half of next year.

2 Simplifying the Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) audit and assessment process

- 2.1 The LSC is managing a project looking at simplifying the SQM audit and assessment process.
- 2.2 Phase 1 of the project started in February 2003. This phase sought to identify any unnecessary bureaucracy resulting from compliance with the SQM standard and its audit. Research was conducted, via a questionnaire, with approximately 80 suppliers nationally (Crime, Crime and Civil contract holders and NfP contract holders). The results indicated that often suppliers were over-reporting for the benefit of the LSC, and many of the requests for simplification were already catered for within the SQM standard and guidance. The LSC will be addressing this over the coming months by working with suppliers, to enable them to identify instances of over reporting, and to reduce bureaucracy themselves by simplifying their own systems. As part of this work, the LSC will also concentrate on re-emphasising the value and purpose behind the SQM, and on enabling suppliers to realise the benefits of key areas such as effective business and financial planning. A CLS Support briefing focusing on the above will be published in March 2004.
- 2.3 Phase 2 of the project examined where current and developing quality of advice indicators (Quality Profile incorporating Case Outcomes, Peer Review etc) could be used as 'alternatives' or 'equivalents' to individual SQM quality requirements. Where the LSC is assured of competence they would not need to audit the proxies in the SQM. This could lead to a greatly reduced SQM audit process, where suppliers are performing well.
- 2.4 Phase 3 of the project will identify how the LSC can support, and offer rewards and incentives to suppliers. They are working closely with Advice Services Alliance, Legal Aid Practitioners Group and the Law Society in developing this work.

3 Clarification of Quality Mark figures published in Email Bulletin (Quality Mark No.5)

3.1 The Quality Mark figures published in Email Bulletin (Quality Mark No.5) have a number of qualifications and may not accurately reflect the number of agencies in each network with the Quality Mark:

- The figures include all applications received, whatever their status.
- The LSC collate the figures on the number of agencies from each network from the QM1 application form. There is a box on the form where the LSC asks agencies which network they belong to. If agencies declare two or more, the LSC only records one.
- There are a number of agencies that declared no representative body on their QM1 application form.