

New Quality Mark (NQM) – Briefing 4

Standards and Definitions - Update



The New Quality Mark Project has now finalised its Quality of Advice Standard. New Benchmarks are also available to accompany the standard. The QAA assessment manual and the final Service Standards will be available by September. To request a copy of the benchmarks now Please contact Judith Courts on the details below.

The Quality of Advice Standard – Final (June 2010)

The Standard: A quality marked advice service ensures that the advice and information it gives to its clients consistently complies with the criteria contained within the Quality of Advice Standard, where appropriate, and demonstrates this by providing sufficient information in the records it maintains of enquiries and cases.

The Criteria

1. ESTABLISHING THE FACTS & DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM

Relevant aspects of the enquiry are explored to establish: the background, the facts, what the client wants and needs, and the client's relevant personal circumstances. This information has been used to correctly diagnose the client's problem.

2. ADVICE

Advice has been offered on the options available to the client, including the likelihood of success, where appropriate. The advice given is accurate, sufficient and provided in time to deal with the client's problem. Where the advice provider has referred to research materials or sought expert advice, there is evidence that this research has been applied correctly to the client's problem.

3. ACTION OR SUPPORT

Action or support was appropriate to the client's needs and was sufficient to progress the issue for the client within any relevant time limit. There is a clear record of what action is to be taken and who (the advice provider or the client) is responsible for any specific action. The advice provider has considered whether the client requires advice on any other issues arising from their original problem.

4. SIGNPOSTING & REFERRAL

Where the advice provider has identified that they cannot meet the client's needs, the client has been helped to gain access to another source of information or advice by signposting or referral.

5. ADVICE RECORDS

Written records are legible and provide a clear picture of the facts of the client's initial query, any subsequent developments, and the advice given by the advice provider at all times. Records clearly note any action necessary, and any taken. Copies of any relevant supporting documents are held on file.

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Common Definitions (June 2010)



Early work on its standards helped the project realise that it needed to define what it meant by common terms in order to make its application process accessible. After sector wide consultation, the project has now produced **Guidance Paper 1 – Common Definitions** which defines what we mean by the common terms shown below. The guidance paper contains detailed guidance on these terms and examples. It also sets out the model the NQM will use to define the different enquiry areas (or topics) in each of the main areas of Social Welfare Law. The four main definitions are shown below. To request a full copy of the Guidance Paper please contact Judith Courts – details below.

Definition 1 – Information

An information service gives clients the information they need, for them to know and do more about their situation. It can include information about rights, policies and practices; and about national and local services and agencies. Responsibility for taking any further action rests with the client.

Definition 2 – Advice

An advice service involves:

- a diagnosis of the client's enquiry and the legal issues involved
- giving information and explaining options
- identifying further action the client can take
- some assistance: e.g. contacting third parties to seek information; filling in forms.

It would usually be completed with one interview although there may be some follow-up work. The client would take responsibility for any further action.

Definition 3 – Advice with Casework

An advice with casework service includes all the elements of an advice service previously listed and also involves taking action on behalf of the client to move the case on. It could include negotiating on behalf of the client with third parties on the telephone, by letter or face-to-face. It will usually involve follow-up work and the adviser would take responsibility for this.

Definition 4 – Specialist Casework

Specialist casework is casework requiring the presentation of complex legal arguments.

For More Information please contact

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