

SQS 3

The service unit maintains accurate and current records of service operations and activities.

- 3.1 Accurate and current records of service operations and activities of the service unit are maintained.
- 3.2 Accurate and current statistical reports are produced for reporting to SWD.
- 3.3 Periodical statistics and reports on the service unit's performance are accessible to the public.

A. INTRODUCTION TO SQS 3 - RECORDS

Service Quality Standard 3 focuses on the operational information that the service unit collects, maintains, analyses and distributes. There are a number of reasons for a service unit to collect, maintain, analyse and distribute information. The first is to satisfy the requirement to be accountable to the organisation and others who provide funding to the service unit.

The second is to provide information that will guide the service unit's management in service planning and evaluation and to make decisions about service provision and about how effectively resources are being used. Whilst it is important for service unit and agency managers to have access to information for service planning and evaluation, we have not focused on this aspect within SQS 3, as this will be covered in the supporting documents for SQSs 6 and 7.

The third is to inform service users and other members of the public about the activities and operations of the service unit.

The type of information provided and the way in which it is presented will depend on two factors, firstly, the purpose for which the information is provided, and secondly, the recipient of information.

B. ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MEETING SQS 3

In order to meet SQS 3, your service unit will need to undertake the following:

1. Maintain accurate and current records of service operations and activities

The exact nature of these records will depend on the service type, but will cover the core activities undertaken to deliver the service. The information that will need to be recorded will include information about the service unit's operations and activities.

These records are the basic information building blocks. The information contained in these records will feed into the statistical reports that are submitted to SWD. Records of service operations and activities do not need to be kept at every level of the organisation. Each agency will need to determine what information will be held at service unit level, and what information will be centralised. It is necessary that these issues are considered, but the way in which the records will be maintained will not be prescribed, as it depends on the agency and service unit involved.

The information that is collected needs to be in accordance with the performance standards as stipulated in the service unit's agreement with SWD, Funding and Service Agreement (FSA)/Service Document (SD).

2. Prepare statistical reports on service unit's operations and activities according to the requirements as specified in the service unit's agreement with SWD, FSA/SD

Reports will be required to cover two areas:

- Service operations (e.g. entry and exit of service users, and staffing)
- Service activities (e.g. caseload and programmes).

The contents of these reports will be guided by SWD requirements such as:

- Information specified in the FSA/SD; and
- SIS forms.

Reports will need to be prepared in accordance with the various guidelines.

3. Make routine reports on service unit's operations and activities available to SWD

In order to meet SQS 3, your service unit will need to demonstrate that you have provided these routine reports that are accurate and submitted in a timely fashion.

In some circumstances, the public may be able to request information through the Code on Access to Information (applicable to SWD service units only) and the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. The agency and service unit will need to be aware of the Code and Ordinance and have a mechanism to ensure that the requirements of the Code and Ordinance are met. Issues relating to the Code and Ordinance are outlined in the materials dealing with SQS 14.

4. Have a quality checking mechanism which ensures records and reports are as accurate as possible

Service Quality Standard 3 requires that records and reports of service operations and activities are accurate. Therefore, in order to meet SQS 3, your service unit will need to demonstrate that it has some form of routine quality assurance. The strategies that could be used by a service unit include a schedule of supervision (e.g. all records prepared by inexperienced staff are checked by their supervisor) and/or a schedule for record audits. Another strategy would be to include the use of records in induction training.

The external assessment will not review the accuracy of, nor audit the service unit's records, but the external assessment will review the records that have been submitted and examine the strategies the service unit has in place to ensure accuracy.

5. Have an approach to make information about the service unit's performance available to the public

Service Quality Standard 3 requires that periodic service statistics and reports are made available to the public. In order to satisfy SQS 3, the service unit will need to show that it has a planned approach to make information available in a way that satisfies the needs of service users and the public. The main way in which services would meet this SQS is by preparing an annual report and making it available upon request. Information provision does not always need to be formal. Other examples of information provision include sharing sessions with service users and/or their families, distribution of newsletters (which do not need to be extensive), and display of information on the service unit's noticeboard. The information provided through these various mechanisms might cover:

- a description of services you have provided or are thinking of providing;
- details about your fund-raising efforts.

C. RESOURCES TO ASSIST YOUR SERVICE UNIT TO MEET SQS 3

This handbook contains some resources that will assist a service unit manager develop systems and practices that will help the service unit meet SQS 3. In particular, we have provided:

- Guidelines for record management.

The guidelines describe the major tasks and issues associated with record keeping. The guidelines may guide you in writing up any procedures for record management. We have indicated, where appropriate, any specific issues that will need to be incorporated into your record keeping and report production mechanisms. The guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive. Though examples of the types of records that may be available are provided, it is expected that each agency and service unit will have different report titles and will make adjustments to reflect their operations.

The SQS does not require that you have written policies and procedures for record management. However, we consider that written procedures (perhaps in the service unit operations manual) would ensure timely data collection and submission, and improve the integrity of the data.

GUIDELINES FOR RECORD MANAGEMENT

Each service unit has its own mission, history, and culture – service units also vary in size and approach to service delivery. The need for and use of records, therefore will not be the same for each service unit. Therefore, instead of prescribing the way in which records will be developed, kept and used, we have identified a set of guidelines for record management which can be used by service units to develop their own processes for data collection, maintenance, analysis and distribution. The first major requirement is that all records need to be clear, purpose-focused and as user-friendly as possible. In order to achieve this fundamental requirement, good planning is needed.

The main steps in record management are:

- Planning for the type of information needed;
- Collecting information;
- Analysing information;
- Reporting information;
- Conducting quality assurance;
- Storing information; and
- Disposing of records.

We use these headings to guide you in developing arrangements for your service unit.

1. Planning for the type of information needed

- The information requirements of all stakeholders, including funders, service managers, staff and service users need to be identified along with how frequently they need information and in what format information needs to be provided.
- A schedule for the preparation and distribution of reports to co-incide with key events (e.g. monthly management meetings, annual meetings, report submission deadlines) should be prepared and provided to all parties responsible for data collection, analysis and reporting.
- A good way to clarify the information needs of all groups and to plan the provision of such information is to plot it into a table. We illustrate this in the table below.

Table 1 – Information planning

What information is required?	Who requires the information ?	How do we collect the information?	How often does the information need to be provided?	What standard report forms or approaches are to be used?
Service operations and activities	SWD	Service records (e.g. service user inquiry, assessment etc)	Quarterly (on the due date specified by SWD)	Statistical Information System (SIS)
Service operations and activities	The public	Service records (e.g. service user inquiry, assessment etc)	Annual (specify a date)	Annual report

2. Collecting information

- Data collection tools (e.g. forms) should be designed to capture basic information about the service unit’s operations and activities.
- Each service unit needs to ensure that it is capturing the information that is needed to satisfy the requirements of both SWD (for statistics reporting) and management (for planning and decision making). We have specified the range of information that will be required by SWD in the table below.

Table 2 – Information to record

<p><i>Information to enable a service unit to report on operations and activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • records of inquiry; • records of service user entry; • records of service user assessment; • records of service user referral; • records of programs and services conducted; and • staff records (e.g. establishment, vacancy, rank etc).

- Definitions for all terms should be available to ensure information that is collected is consistent.
- Responsibility for the collection and submission of data should be clearly specified and provided to all staff involved in record management.

3. **Analysing information**

- Analysis of information needs to be conducted in a consistent manner to enable periodic comparisons.
- The level of analysis will depend on the specific needs of the users. For example, records of applications to enter the service will not generally need to be analysed, however, if there is a problem with long waiting lists, then the service may need to analyse this data for the specific purpose of reviewing its referral mechanisms or service structure.

4. **Reporting information**

- Information submitted to SWD should be presented in the specified format. An example of this appears in the table below.

Table 3 - Service unit's operation and activities reporting

Statistics required for the FAMILY CASEWORK SERVICE
A. Statistics on Output Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Output Standard 1: Average number of cases per caseworker• Output Standard 2: Average number of cases closed having completed the agreed plan per caseworker• Output Standard 3: Average number of counselling hours provided per caseworker
B. Supplementary Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supplementary Information 1: Number of referrals made• Supplementary Information 2: Number of case conferences• Supplementary Information 3: No. of intakes/enquiries handled• Supplementary Information 4: Statistics on active cases• Supplementary Information 5: Statistics on new/reactivated cases• Supplementary Information 6: Group/Programme activities
C. Staff Statistics
The statistics required for this service are contained in SWD Form B1

- Information provided to the public will need to be much simpler than that provided to SWD.
- A clear plan for the publishing and/or dissemination of information should be developed and its achievement monitored.
- Information dissemination activities should reflect the needs and capabilities of the recipients. For example, SWD may specify that it needs reports on a quarterly basis and indicate the date on which reports are due. These requirements should be observed when submitting reports.
- Service user confidentiality requirements will need to be taken into consideration when designing report formats and when determining to whom information will be disseminated.
- It is important that any personal information about service users that may be gathered or used as part of the service unit's reporting be in accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance and relevant Codes of Access to Information.
- There is no specified way in which routine information needs to be made available to the public. Therefore, the service unit will need to plan how it will make information available.

5. Conducting quality assurance

- Procedures should be developed to ensure that the information provided, including the records and statistical reports' is reliable, valid and consistent. These procedures may include training, supervision and periodic audit.

6. Storing information

- All information that allows individuals to be identified should be stored in a way that ensures that privacy and confidentiality requirements are not breached.
- For information stored electronically, data backup and disaster recovery plans for all systems should be developed and implemented.

7. Disposing of information

- There should be a plan for the routine disposal of records over appropriate time periods.
- The method of record disposal will ensure that service and service user information is not inadvertently released to the public and that service user confidentiality is maintained.

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