

community legal service

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Service Planning

*Quality Mark Briefing No.5
9th July 2002*

This briefing applies to all Quality Mark levels

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**This briefing is a resource for your whole organisation.
Please ensure that every member of staff involved in
Quality Marked work has access to it.**

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Making the best use of this briefing

We are aware that some of our briefings are fairly lengthy documents. Please do not feel that you are obliged to read the whole briefing from cover to cover – the headings on our contents page will point you towards the major themes under discussion.

Further sources of support and guidance

If you need further guidance on any of the issues covered in this briefing, please contact your network, the Legal Services Commission or the CLS Support consultancy line – see the pages at the back of this briefing for contact details.

You may come across the telephone symbol  at various points in the text which deal with what we regard to be a complex issue. The symbol is there to remind that we are able to provide further clarification and/or guidance if you need it.

Please note that the What's New pages on ASA's website www.asauk.org.uk provide guidance that highlights and clarifies both new and existing requirements for Quality Mark and General Civil Contract Holders.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Quality Mark requires organisations to plan the information or advice service that they deliver. This briefing aims to clarify Quality Mark requirements regarding the planning of services and provides guidance on the planning process. The relevant requirements can be found at Section A1 of the Information, General Help and Specialist Quality Mark standards.

1.2 The term “plan” has been used generically when referring to the document that will need to be prepared for any level of service.

1.3 The briefing covers:

- an overview of Standard A – Access to Service;
- the requirements for each Quality Mark level;
- planning terminology;
- questions to answer before developing your plan;
- tools for effective planning;
- case studies of organisations developing plans;
- implementing the plan;
- links to other Quality Mark requirements;
- reviewing the plan;
- further sources of information;
- sample plans;
- templates for developing your own organisation’s plan.

1.4 The written document required as evidence for each level of the Quality Mark varies:

Standard	Evidence Required	Period Covered
Assisted Information	A plan or statement	Current year
General Help	A written strategy	3 years – year 1 in detail
Specialist	A business plan	3 years – year 1 in detail

1.5 Requirements at Assisted Information level are discussed separately at sections 6 and 7, as these requirements are less detailed than those applying to the General Help or Specialist levels.

1.6 Sample documents are included in the appendices to this briefing. These documents are also reproduced as templates to provide a form which you can use as a “blank example” when you draw up a plan/strategy for your organisation.

1.7 The documents referred to in this briefing are:

- The **Quality Mark standard** (first edition April 2000)
- The **Information standard workbook** (first edition April 2000)
- The **General Help standard workbook** (first edition April 2000)
- The **Specialist Quality Mark standard** (Issue 1: April 2002)

- The **Guidance to the Specialist Quality Mark** (Issue 1: April 2002)

- 1.8 The Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) replaced LAFQAS, the Legal Services Commission (LSC) quality standard for holders of Legal Aid contracts, with effect from 30th April 2002. It applies to all organisations that wish to be badged at Specialist level, whether funded by the LSC or not. Where LAFQAS-compliant procedures do not match requirements detailed at Lists 2 and 3 of Appendix 3 of the SQM, this will be recorded as an observation only until October 2002, from which point omissions will be noted as quality concerns (the LSC's new term for audit non-compliances).
- 1.9 Where the briefing refers to requirements that apply at the General Help level, this also includes General Help with Casework.

2 Overview of Quality Mark Standard A

- 2.1 Standard A of the Quality Mark deals with Access to Service and requires an organisation to:
- plan the service (requirement A1);
 - ensure that the community is aware of the service being offered (A2);
 - demonstrate a commitment to providing equality of access to clients (A3).

These requirements apply to the Assisted Information, General Help and Specialist levels.

- 2.2 Requirement A2 specifies that information/advice providers ensure that other relevant organisations are aware of services provided, including how they can be accessed. Examples of how you might meet this requirement include using service leaflets or collaborating with other local providers to produce a borough-wide poster.
- 2.3 Requirement A3 specifies that organisations must have a written policy covering non-discrimination in relation to clients and service delivery. Requirement D1 specifies that organisations must have an equal opportunities policy covering non-discrimination in the selection, recruitment and treatment of staff. Organisations can choose whether to have one policy that covers both A3 and D1 requirements, or to develop separate written policies for each requirement.
- 2.4 This briefing addresses A1 in detail and does not include any further information on A2 and A3. Please refer to the relevant sections of the Quality Mark for further information on these requirements.

3 Summary of the A1 requirement

- 3.1 A1.1 of each Quality Mark standard details the written document that organisations should have in place. A1.2 of both the General Help and Specialist standards also details how often the document needs to be reviewed.
- 3.2 The General Help standard details specific evidence requirements on the areas a plan should address at A1.1 and A1.2. In the SQM, these requirements are at A.1.1. The Specialist standard A1.1 also includes definitions that qualify the requirements, which are mandatory where the word "must" appears (Specialist Quality Mark, page 25). Where the sentence or paragraph begins with the word "Note" it contains information to help you and is not mandatory.

- 3.3 In the SQM, guidance is contained in a separate document and does not contain any mandatory requirements. At General Help level, the basic requirements are set out in the Purpose and Evidence sections on page 35 of the Quality Mark standard. There are headings listed under the guidance to these sections at pages 35 and 36, which are recommendations relating to the areas about which it is suggested you provide information. Although these recommendations are currently guidance only and not mandatory, this briefing has chosen broadly to follow the format suggested in the guidance.

4 Planning terminology

- 4.1 One of the confusing features of guidance and information on planning is the use of sometimes unfamiliar terminology, which is often used to mean different things in different contexts. The Quality Mark uses a number of different terms for plans (see paragraph 4.3 below) and the General Help and Specialist levels make use of planning terminology in both requirements and guidance. This section offers a guide to the main terms you might come across in relation to planning in the Quality Mark. Although this section applies primarily to General Help and Specialist levels, it may also be relevant to organisations applying at Assisted Information level that want to know more about planning.

Plan, strategy or business plan?

- 4.2 Planning can be summarised as being about setting future goals for your organisation and working out what activities and resources are needed to achieve those goals. Planning usually also involves considering your current position and, in particular, being clear about why your organisation exists in the first place and what it is trying to achieve.
- 4.3 Each level of the Quality Mark refers to a different document to meet the A1 requirement. The terminology used provides an indication of the detail and content the Quality Mark requirements expect from each document:
- **statement/plan:** (Assisted Information level) – a simple document which can be either a statement of intent or a plan that outlines basic information about the service and its future plans;
 - **service strategy:** (General Help level) – a more detailed plan, which according to the guidance (pages 35 and 36 of the Quality Mark standard), should both detail current services and the rationale for those services and also include proposed enhanced and new services and how you will fund these;
 - **business plan:** (Specialist level) – a more formal and detailed version of a service plan or a strategy which includes greater consideration of the funding required for the strategy adopted.

What is the difference between aims and objectives?

- 4.4 When quality standards or funders refer to planning, the terms “aims” and “objectives” are often used interchangeably. This can cause confusion! Requirements at all levels of the Quality Mark state that the plan must outline what your organisation aims to achieve, and at General Help and Specialist levels demand that your organisation sets out key objectives. In this context, “aims” refer to the broad goals regarding what you are trying to achieve, whereas “objectives” are statements that specify how you are going to fulfil each aim.

4.5 Example:

The Management Committee and staff of an organisation agree the following aims:

1. To provide a quality service.
2. To ensure services are accessible.
3. To influence the policies and practices that affect service users.

4.6 Aims should set out a limited number of priorities for the organisation – usually anything from two to five. They should usually be long-term and used to guide the organisation's work for a number of years. However, you may find some aims are concrete and relatively easy to achieve, eg identifying a source of funding to introduce an extensive IT package into your organisation. Your aims should be kept under regular review to ensure they remain relevant and continue to reflect the overall direction of your organisation.

4.7 Assisted Information plans can be confined to aims for the forthcoming year. In this case you will find that your aims can be short-term and limited in scope. What you are required to do is identify a number of aims you want to achieve within the year. This means you can include more limited aims such as:

- To work with the local doctor's surgery to provide information on health.
- To introduce IT to the service.

4.8 You will find that aims at Assisted Information level relate to projects or ideas which can be time-related, eg achievable within six months, and measurable (see paragraphs 8.15 - 8.17 for information on SMART objectives).

4.9 At General Help and Specialist levels the more detailed information regarding what your organisation wants to achieve in years one (or two and three) will be expressed as objectives. Objectives will detail specific changes and developments you wish to implement, in contrast to your aims, which will be broad and aspirational. Linking objectives to aims, ie checking that any objectives you identify are consistent with a given aim, can ensure that the organisation remains on track and achieves its goals.

4.10 Example:

The following objectives could relate to the first aim identified previously at paragraph 4.5 – to provide a quality service:

1. To apply for, and achieve, the Community Legal Service Quality Mark.
2. To identify resources for a training programme for all advisers.
3. To introduce client feedback mechanisms.
4. To introduce monitoring of financial gains for clients.

4.11 Once the organisation has identified its objectives, each of these can be incorporated into a detailed work plan which sets out who will be responsible for which pieces of work and the time-frame and resources necessary to meet each objective.

4.12 For a sample statement of aims and objectives please refer to the General Help level case study at section 9 of this briefing.

5 Questions to answer before starting to develop or revise your plan

5.1 This section outlines the questions that you might find useful to consider before starting to develop and revise your plan, such as:

- who will be involved in the process;
- what resources will be required;
- what the final document might look like.

What is the wider value of developing a plan?

5.2 Planning has benefits that extend beyond the Quality Mark and is increasingly recognised by funders and organisations as an essential activity for effective organisational management.

5.3 Working through the planning process can assist both Management Committee members and staff in clarifying the values and long-term plans of their organisation.

- Planning can help you ensure that the activities you undertake are related to the aims your organisation wants to achieve.
- Planning is recognised as a means of enabling organisations to anticipate problems, develop new projects, maximise the opportunities provided by new initiatives that can help sustain them, and identify possible developments and/or improvements to particular existing services or the overall service provided.
- Evidence of planning is required by the majority of funders as a quality assurance indicator.

5.4 A1 is an overarching requirement within the Quality Mark. The plan that you develop to address A1 forms the basis of your whole Quality Mark application, as it sets out what services you currently provide, the reasons for providing those services, and any developments you intend to pursue.

5.5 The review of the plan that is required at General Help and Specialist levels also impacts on other requirements of the Quality Mark. Section 12 provides further details.

Who should be involved?

5.6 Before starting to develop a service strategy it is worth considering who needs to be involved in the development and ongoing maintenance of the plan. A good starting point for organisations is to involve the governing body (the Management Committee or Trustee Board of an organisation). This is because the governing body has:

- ultimate responsibility for the organisation;
- responsibility for securing funds for possible developments identified by the plan.

5.7 Staff have a key role in ensuring the plan becomes a reality – involving them at the development stage can help achieve this. If you are preparing your Quality Mark application against a tight deadline you may not have time to include Management Committee members or staff in the development of the plan. If this is the case, you should ensure that they are aware of the plan's existence and what it will mean for them once it has been finalised, as auditors may explore this point. In particular, Management Committee and staff should be aware of the ongoing need to work to and review the plan. See sections 13 and 14 for further information on reviewing the plan.

- 5.8 The Quality Mark guidance for General Help and Specialist level plans is specifically focused on advice services and the Quality Mark context. You might have other considerations to bear in mind when developing a service plan, or have an existing plan that already meets the organisation's needs.
- 5.9 You may have to meet requirements from your network organisation or funders, and as a result be obliged to provide information/evidence additional to that required by the Quality Mark. This is particularly likely to be true of organisations applying at Assisted Information level.
- 5.10 Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx) should be aware that the NACAB Membership Scheme requires Bureaux to have a three-year Business and Development Plan (Quality Area 4.5). This includes several elements that are additional to those required by the Quality Mark at General Help and Specialist levels – ie contingency measures for crises, premises repair, equipment failure. CABx should refer to Section 4 of the NACAB Membership Scheme for further details. Bureaux can use guidance on planning which is on the Bureau Management Information System (BMIS).
- 5.11 Other network standards, eg DIAL UK Quality Standards, address planning and can provide guidance on developing a plan. These standards may include requirements specific to the client group you work with.

Should the plan cover the whole organisation or just the advice service?

- 5.12 If your organisation provides a range of services that include the provision of information/advice, you will need to decide whether to draw up a plan that only covers your advice service or one that include all your organisation's services and projects.
- 5.13 Example
- Trent Asian Women's organisation (TAW) operates a daily advice service to women from the local Asian community. They also have project funding for a crèche, have a long-established community development programme (where they visit schools and local hospitals to ensure that staff are aware of the needs of Asian women) and organise annual day trips for Asian women and children. TAW has decided to make a Quality Mark application at General Help level.
- 5.14 In addressing General Help requirement A, TAW will need to decide whether to draw up a plan that reflects developments to the advice service only or to write one that also includes information about the crèche, community development programme and day trip project as well.
- 5.15 Questions that TAW might need to consider include:
- Have they prioritised achieving the Quality Mark and therefore want to concentrate their efforts on meeting the Quality Mark requirement? If so, they might develop a plan for the advice centre and include an objective that they will extend the plan to cover other projects in the future.
 - Are the individual services very distinct from each other and therefore does it make sense to develop a plan for each service?
 - Are they committed to offering a holistic service and view services as interlinking? This would give value to the idea of having a plan that covers the whole service and might help them address the requirements of funders.

- Do they want the plan to have a wider application than the Quality Mark? They may feel that including all projects will ensure that the plan can be used for other quality standard applications they might make in the future.
- Does it concern them that drawing up a plan and policies for just one section of the organisation may create an inconsistent approach and prioritise the advice service above other services?

5.16 It is up to individual organisations to decide the scope of your plan – to meet Quality Mark requirements you need to ensure it covers those services that provide information and advice for which you are making a Quality Mark application.

All in one document?

5.17 The Quality Mark does not prescribe that all the information for your plan needs to be in one document. For example, ensuring a commitment to equal opportunities is referred to in the General Help guidance as something you might want to include in your plan, but this is likely to already have been addressed in detail in your equal opportunities policy. The finance plan/budget required in the Specialist standard could be separate from the business plan. You have a number of options:

- Develop a plan in the form of a single document that incorporates all relevant information.
- Design the plan as a basic core document from which you make reference to separate documents that cover specific items of information.

6 Assisted Information level requirements

6.1 Assisted Information requirements are dealt with separately in this section and the next, because they are substantially simpler than those that apply at the other Quality Mark levels. The remainder of the briefing (section 8 onwards) contains guidance that is appropriate for General Help and Specialist levels. Organisations applying at Assisted Information level may wish to refer to these later sections if you choose to develop a more detailed plan than that required by the Quality Mark.

6.2 To meet the Assisted Information level requirements, organisations must produce two documents:

- Statement of aims (A1.1)
- Statement of services provided (A1.2).

6.3 The statement of aims at A1.1 can be either a written plan or a statement. This document should set out what the organisation aims to achieve in the forthcoming year. The Information standard workbook includes a guidance section to assist organisations when considering the components of the plan they are asked to produce (Information Standard workbook pages 12 and 13). The guidance suggests that you might include:

- which client group you serve;
- the information needs of this group;
- how you aim to provide for this need in the forthcoming year.

6.4 The statement outlining what is required by A1.2 can be included in the above statement or plan or set out in a separate document/leaflet provided to clients.

7 Assisted Information case study

- 7.1 The following example demonstrates how an organisation might meet requirement A1 and includes a sample statement of aims (A1.1) and statement of services provided (A1.2) at Appendix I and III of this briefing. These documents are also reproduced in template form, which can be amended and used in a format suitable for your own organisation.
- 7.2 The Greenwood Community Centre is situated on a local estate and provides premises and facilities for a number of local groups including a pre-school playgroup, a youth club and a credit union. The Centre staff co-ordinate the bookings for these sessions and ensure that the building and equipment are kept in working order.
- 7.3 For the last year, the two Centre administrators have been operating an information service on three mornings a week, as they had become aware that local residents using the services based at the Centre needed information about benefits and housing. Since starting the information service, the Centre administrators have formed links with local advice providers such as a Citizens Advice Bureau and a number of solicitors' firms, and have been operating an effective signposting service to them.
- 7.4 The administrators have been working towards applying for the Assisted Information Quality Mark, and the Management Committee of the Centre has agreed that their Vice-Chair will work with the administrators in developing a service plan that will address A1.1 of the Quality Mark standard.
- 7.5 The Greenwood team starts to work on the service plan using the headings suggested in the Information standard workbook.

Client group

- 7.6 The client group that the Greenwood Community Centre serves is clearly defined by geographical area the Greenwood estate. Other organisations might define their client group by:
- another geographical area such as a local authority or ward – the constitution or memorandum for an organisation will often define this catchment area;
 - a target group such as Asian women, young people, disabled people.

The information needs of clients

- 7.7 Before launching the information service, the Greenwood team carried out a feasibility study asking users of the Centre which social welfare related problems they most commonly experienced. This provided the team with necessary data about the information needs of Centre users. This information is added to the Greenwood plan, which explains that there is a local need for information on welfare benefits and housing issues due to a high level of unemployment on the estate and the large number of residents needing to be re-housed because of the recent demolition of a tower block.
- 7.8 When developing your service plan or statement you will need to make an assessment of the likely or known information needs of your target group/residents within your catchment area. You might use current statistics of the issues existing clients bring to your organisation, or data about the area such as poverty indicators and unemployment

- 7.9 statistics (please refer to paragraph 8.9 for sources of statistical information). You could also draw on your knowledge of the local area – asylum seeker families may have been recently housed in an area through dispersal, or a local industry may be on the decline.

Plans for the forthcoming year

- 7.10 This section of the plan or statement should outline any plans for maintaining, developing or improving your service. These ideas should be based on what you know the needs of your clients to be.
- 7.11 The Greenwood team brainstorms ideas about how the Centre might improve or develop its service. Staff are conscious that the Centre is not funded to provide information services and relies on the local authority being happy to allow the administrators to carry out this function during the working hours that it funds to carry out other activities.
- 7.12 The ideas that the Greenwood team comes up with include:
- Submitting funding applications for an information worker. The Centre wants to extend the service to run all day so all Centre users can have access to it. The administrators are already stretched and feel that the local authority may not be prepared to support the service in the long term as it might conflict with other developments planned for the Centre.
 - Responding to the needs of families who have recently been housed on the estate following dispersal and who need information in Albanian. The Vice-Chair knows the local authority has a translation unit and the administrators are aware that the local Law Centre has access to interpreters.
 - Improving resources for the service, including purchasing leaflet racks to display leaflets and developing IT resources/buying stats software so that staff can enter their records on the Centre's computer, rather than in the book they currently use.
 - Switching one session from the morning to the afternoon. The team has noticed that one of the morning sessions tends not to be used as it clashes with a popular community group session.
- 7.13 The Greenwood team uses these ideas to draw up its service plan. Designing a plan based on specific objectives will make it easier for the team to monitor its success in achieving what the plan sets out.
- 7.14 The Greenwood service plan is at Appendix I, and the corresponding template is at Appendix II.
- 7.15 The administrators have already drafted a leaflet that they believe meets requirement A1.2. At the meeting to develop the service plan, the administrators and Vice-Chair check that the draft leaflet meets A1.2 by referring to page 10 of the Information standard workbook to ensure that the leaflet details:
- ✓ what services are provided
 - ✓ when services are provided;
 - ✓ where services are provided;
 - ✓ how services are provided.
- 7.16 The team are satisfied that the leaflet fully meets the relevant Quality Mark requirements.
- 7.17 The Greenwood service statement is at Appendix III, and a template for an Assisted Information level service statement is at Appendix IV.

7.18 For information on reviewing the service plan, please refer to section 13.

8 Tools for effective planning

8.1 This section discusses methods for developing the service strategy or business plan required at General Help and Specialist levels and outlines the key concepts referred to in the planning process. Adopting these methods or concepts is not compulsory but can assist you in drawing up your plan.

SWOT analysis

8.2 One of the best-known tools used in planning is a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis collects participants' views of their organisation. It can enable you to:

- assess the current position of your organisation;
- identify future issues you might have to address.

8.3 Carrying out a SWOT analysis involves analysing the following factors:

- *strengths* – internal factors that put your organisation in a strong position, eg a committed staff group;
- *weaknesses* – internal factors that weaken your organisation's position, eg not having sufficient IT resources;
- *opportunities* – external factors that could lead to positive outcomes for the organisation, eg a new government policy in cases where your organisation has a track record in delivering services which are consistent with that policy;
- *threats* – external factors that could threaten the organisation, eg new suppliers such as commercial firms starting to deliver advice.

8.4 From October 2002, the Specialist standard requires organisations to undertake a SWOT analysis and use the content as a point of reference for the business plan.

STEP or PEST analysis

8.5 Internal factors tend to be easier than external ones to identify in a SWOT analysis – they concern your organisation and resources that you are familiar with. External opportunities and threats may be harder to pin down. STEP analysis (also known as PEST analysis) is a tool that can help you identify these external factors.

Please note: It is not a requirement at any level of the Quality Mark that you conduct a STEP/PEST analysis – the information provided in the following paragraphs is simply included as good practice guidance.

A STEP analysis considers:

- **S**ocial factors
- **T**echnological factors
- **E**conomic factors
- **P**olitical factors

You can also choose to add an additional E to the acronym (making a STEEP analysis) to address environmental factors.

8.6 It makes sense to start the planning process with a STEP analysis, as this should generate ideas that can be used when drawing up the opportunities and threats sections

of your SWOT analysis. The process of using the STEP and SWOT analysis is outlined in section 9 – the General Help case study. Both forms of analysis can be used to help identify the issues your organisation should consider and to inform the aims and objectives you develop for your service.

Community profile

- 8.7 The General Help standard requires plans to demonstrate an understanding of the needs and priorities of the community served, and the guidance suggests plans should include a community profile and identified needs. The Specialist standard does not have a similar requirement, but the definitions for A1.1 state that the SWOT analysis should include reference to any available Community Legal Service Partnership (CLSP) needs analysis and strategic plan or other needs assessment/community profile, so this section may be relevant to Specialist providers.
- 8.8 A community profile is a collection of data regarding the local community. This data should assist your organisation in recognising the needs of the clients who use your services. The community profile can also inform your SWOT analysis, as it will identify wider local needs an organisation may choose to respond to.
- 8.9 Sources of statistical information for a community profile include:
- The census: the last census was carried out in 2001 – its results became available in February 2002. The county reports can be broken down by local authority district.
 - Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (IMD)¹: this provides indices on income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training, housing and geographical access to services for wards in England.
 - Other sources of local information: local authorities often maintain an information bank of data.
 - CLSP data: one of the initial priorities of CLSPs is to assess local need for legal and advice services. If analysis has already been carried out by your local CLSP, you can refer to its findings rather than duplicate the work yourself.

Client profile

- 8.10 The business and development plan that CABx are required to develop under Quality Area 4.5 of the NACAB Membership Scheme includes a community profile and a client profile. Please note: a client profile is **not** required by either the General Help or Specialist Quality Mark standard. However, it can be a useful exercise for organisations to undertake, as a comparison between the community and client profiles will indicate which sections of the community are using the service and which are not.
- 8.11 A client profile is a sample of clients that use the service, usually conducted by questionnaire. A client profile can include details of clients' age, gender, ethnicity, employment status and disability.
- 8.12 Client profile data can help identify areas your organisation might need to address, eg if the community profile shows there is a large number of disabled people living in your catchment area but they tend not to use your service, you may need to identify why this is and improve access or publicity to this group of local residents.

¹ DETR is now known as the Department for Transport, London and the Regions (DTLR).

Mission statement

- 8.13 A mission statement is a brief statement that sets out the core beliefs and ethics of an organisation and how they are put into practice. Paragraph 10.3 of this briefing provides an example of a mission statement.
- 8.14 The Quality Mark does not require organisations to have a mission statement. However, at the General Help level the plan must include a description of core values. A mission statement can both help to meet this requirement and also assist organisations in identifying the aims they want to achieve.

SMART objectives

- 8.15 Objectives should stand alone, and unlike aims should not be general and aspirational. When you start to draw up your objectives, you should make them as specific as possible. The more focused your objectives are, the easier it will be to monitor your progress in meeting them. It is helpful to think of developing objectives which meet the following criteria:

S – specific

M – measurable

A – attainable or achievable

R – realistic

T – timed or targeted

- 8.16 An example of a SMART objective is:

To secure funding for a homelessness project worker by April 2003.

- 8.17 It should be apparent from any targets you draw up to meet an objective that you have addressed SMART by incorporating timescales and describing how you will monitor progress.

9 General Help case study

- 9.1 This case study is based on an organisation meeting General Help requirements and also contains information relevant to Specialist level requirements. Section 10 discusses the specific requirements that have to be considered at Specialist level.
- 9.2 Banner Action Centre (BAC) operates a casework-based service with six paid workers. BAC operates a collective structure and is governed by a Management Committee drawn predominantly from the local community.
- 9.3 BAC has been in existence for twenty years. Its mission statement is:

“BAC provides free, independent, quality advice to ensure that individuals and groups within the Banner community are able to access the rights and services they are entitled to”.

- 9.4 BAC is applying for the Quality Mark at General Help with Casework level in welfare benefits and debt. They have provided advice in these areas in response to local demand since the Centre opened.
- 9.5 BAC has thought through how it wants to develop a plan and has decided it would be a good idea to involve staff and Management Committee. They decide to undertake a SWOT and STEP analysis as a starting point for their service strategy. Management Committee and staff attend a one-day away day to work on the service strategy. The first exercise they complete is a STEP analysis – they split into four groups and each group considers one of the STEP areas. The groups are asked to consider national, regional and local factors in their analysis. The table that follows shows the results.

<p style="text-align: center;">SOCIAL</p> <p>Demographic changes – increasing number of older people nationally, increasing number of younger people locally</p> <p>Social inclusion/exclusion agenda</p> <p>Government immigration policy resulting in dispersal and social tensions</p> <p>Increased homelessness – particularly in the area served by BAC</p> <p>Continuing poverty and deprivation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TECHNOLOGICAL</p> <p>Increase in public info/kiosks/one stop shops – favoured by some local authorities</p> <p>New forms of delivery but expensive</p> <p>Internet access not for all</p> <p>Growth of helplines</p> <p>IT resources for advice workers</p> <p>Stats packages</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ECONOMIC</p> <p>Employment flexibility means fewer full-time jobs/poor conditions of employment</p> <p>Closure of key industries – local economy affected</p> <p>Increasing poverty</p> <p>Urban regeneration packages</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">POLITICAL</p> <p>Best Value agenda</p> <p>Partnerships</p> <p>Human Rights Act</p> <p>Community Legal Service</p> <p>Changes to funding of Legal Aid</p> <p>More focus on information and self help, less on representation</p> <p>Young people high priority – ConneXions</p>

- 9.6 Having carried out the STEP analysis, BAC can use the results to inform its brainstorm on the external opportunities and threats, which will form part of the SWOT analysis.
- 9.7 The co-ordinator of the Centre has compiled a community profile and presents the results:
- The Centre is based in the Banner Estate, which is in the Bridge House ward – 89% of clients are from the estate. The remaining clients come from the wider local area.
 - Bridge House ward population is 43% white, 32% Turkish, 15% Kurdish and 10% other ethnic groups.

- The estate has a high percentage of young people – 30% of the estate’s residents are under 16 and 87% of families receive free school meals.
- Unemployment levels are high – 13%.
- 65% of adults are eligible to receive benefits.
- Housing is predominantly local authority owned with 8% owner-occupancy.
- Council tax arrears are 41% and the local authority reports average arrears of £350.
- A report commissioned by the local authority reports high unemployment, poor housing and lack of local amenities, including child care, play areas, social facilities. An increasing number of issues, including escalating crime levels, are being attributed to a drugs problem on the estate, but there have been no studies or research carried out to confirm this.
- BAC’s own monitoring shows that catalogue debts and a lack of access to bank services are affecting an increasing number of clients.

9.8 The local CLSP has recently published its draft strategic plan which records that:

- the Bridge House ward is within the most deprived 10% of wards in the country according to the DETR Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000;
- welfare benefits, debt and housing have been identified as priority categories of advice need for the award of CLS Fund contracts;
- the borough has high levels of need for community care and health services. The teenage pregnancy rate for the Bridge House ward is three times the national average;
- there are three community groups and two solicitor practices based on the estate with most other information/advice providers located a considerable distance from the estate, in the town centre and shopping area.

9.9 Having completed both the STEP analysis and the analysis of the community profile, BAC is ready to complete the SWOT analysis. When conducting a SWOT analysis it is useful to brainstorm issues as a group and when all the ideas have been collected to sort them into the four main relevant areas. The following table shows the results of BAC’s SWOT analysis.

<p>STRENGTHS Committed staff team Strong links with local community Profile with local councillors and MP High success rate when recovering benefit etc</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES Service does not respond to all community needs, eg young people Only 2 computers No access to internet Currently unincorporated status but have increasing liabilities for salaries and rent Management Committee often inquorate</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES CLS and contracting Partnership with local youth organisation Increased recognition of poverty within the area and initiatives to address Explore possibility of credit union for the area – in partnership with other local agencies</p>	<p>THREATS Dependent on local authority funding Best Value agenda – how will compare with other providers? Funders view collective model as outdated and seek change</p>

9.10 The BAC team then reviews the Centre's aims. These were drawn up two years ago when the mission statement was developed. The team considers whether the aims are still valid and address current priorities.

9.11 The aims are:

- to ensure that advice provided to the local community is of a high quality;
- to provide resources to and support for individuals and groups to fully access local services.

The team agree that these aims are still current and decide that one more should be added to reflect the issues arising from the SWOT analysis:

- To work in partnership with other organisations to tackle poverty.

9.12 The BAC team splits into small groups to use the aims and SWOT analysis as a basis for developing objectives. Each of the objectives should describe a specific activity that will contribute to BAC fulfilling one of its aims. The following chart details the work that the sub-groups have carried out. It is useful to create a chart to ensure each aspect of a given objective is addressed.

Identified objectives	Tasks	Resources required	How we will monitor	Responsibility/ Timescale
To conduct review of management & governance systems	To draw up specification	Attendance at meeting	Report to MC	MC and co-ordinator by 02/02
	To tender for independent review	Identify funds	Securing funds	MC & co-ordinator by 03/02
To achieve the Quality Mark	To undertake audit of current practice and develop action plan	One staff member	QM application submitted	Staff member by 31/01/02
	To train staff in new procedures	One staff member and time for workers to attend training	Lead member to review compliance with procedures	Staff member by 03/02
To explore potential new service for young people	Talk to youth agency re. potential outreach or partnership	MC and staff member to meet with youth agency	Report to MC	MC & staff member by 09/02
	Identify funding for service	Staff member to identify and submit bid	MC to sign off any applications	Staff member by 12/02

- 9.13 BAC checks that its objectives meet SMART criteria. For example, the second objective is:
- **Specific** – to achieve the Quality Mark
 - **Measurable** – will need to submit application by set date and measure compliance against requirements
 - **Achievable** – BAC is an advice centre that is capable of meeting Quality Mark requirements
 - **Realistic** – is something that BAC is capable of achieving within the defined timetable
 - **Timed** – has clear deadlines and an action plan to complete.
- 9.14 The BAC team agrees that the following issues should be incorporated into the strategy as longer-term aims:
- To identify a funding strategy and explore diverse funding sources.
 - To introduce an IT strategy including a BAC website.
 - To monitor regeneration and Best Value agenda and respond.
- 9.15 The Chair and co-ordinator agree that they will compile a draft service strategy using information collected on the planning day. The draft strategy will be distributed for consideration by the Management Committee and staff.
- 9.16 The Chair and co-ordinator might choose to format the strategy in a number of ways, but are aware that they need to comply with Quality Mark evidence requirements (on page 35 of the General Help standard). In addition they also consider the guidance to the General Help standard (on page 35 and 36 of the Quality Mark standard). The service strategy developed by BAC is at Appendix V. Appendix VI is a template to help develop your own service strategy.

10 Additional considerations at Specialist level

- 10.1 The business plan for the Specialist level is broadly similar to the service strategy required for General Help level. The plan must be relevant to your organisation's aims and objectives and include details of how each item is going to be achieved.
- 10.2 The SQM also requires that you "have regard" to the issues listed below when drawing up your plan. However, please note that you do not have to include information specifically about these issues in the plan itself, but auditors may expect to see evidence that you have considered them, such as minutes of management team meetings (see Specialist Quality Mark Guidance, page 6). The points that need to be considered include:
- description of the client group to be served;
 - details of services to be delivered, ie fields of law and levels;
 - details of opening hours and access arrangements;
 - summary of caseworkers' areas of expertise;
 - finance/plan budget;
- and from October 2002:
- SWOT analysis;
 - details of how you intend to promote your service.

10.3 The additional factors a business plan needs to address beyond those required at General Help level are:

- Summary of caseworkers' areas of expertise – the Specialist Quality Mark Annex B provides some suggested classifications but you can use your own if you prefer.
- More detailed financial plan/budget – the definitions at page 25 of the Specialist Quality Mark standard states that you should address “*the monetary impact, in broad terms, of the planned service on income and expenditure (and any capital investment) ie an analysis that shows how you can afford to deliver the planned services (including steps to secure funding or generate investment capital if necessary).*”

and from October 2002:

- A SWOT analysis – your plan needs to detail the assumptions you have made and taken into account when planning your services. You will also need to include reference to any available CLSP needs analysis and strategic plan or other needs assessment/community profile.
- Service promotion – your plan will need to include details of how you promote your service and A2 should be referred to as the minimum for this requirement.

These additional elements are not included in the General Help sample or template. Specialist level providers who wish to use the template in this briefing should amend the template to incorporate the above requirements.

11 Implementing the plan

- 11.1 Once the plan has been written it will need to be implemented. There is a danger that organisations spend time and effort in developing a plan only to then file it away and forget it exists. If you have put resources into writing the plan, you should consider how to maximise its value.
- 11.2 This will mean revisiting the plan on a regular basis. In particular, the plan should be consulted when new opportunities emerge, eg new funding possibilities arising from your local area being designated a regeneration zone. The plan can be thought of as a map for your organisation – you can test if new projects might take you too far off course, distracting you from your stated aims.
- 11.3 Identify how you will use the plan – you may choose to add the plan as a standing item on agendas for staff and Management Committee meetings so that you can chart your organisation's progress in meeting the plan on a regular basis.

12 Links to other Quality Mark requirements

- 12.1 Requirement A1 is both useful and important in terms of overall organisational management, as it provides a link to a number of annual reviews of different aspects of your service that are required by the Quality Mark. It may well make sense when you are undertaking your annual review of the plan (as required by A1.2) to carry out all or some of these other reviews at the same time.

12.2 The annual reviews you will need to undertake are:

Quality Mark level/standard	Assisted Information level	General Help level	Specialist level
A		A1.2 Annual review of service strategy	A1.2 Business plan reviewed at least every 6 months
B		B1.3 Regular review of referrals	B1.3 Annual review of referral records
C	C2.1 Level of service reviewed annually	C2.1 Review level of service performance against service strategy every 12 months C3.3 Use financial information to assist in review of services	C2.4 Internal financial review every 6 months Quarterly variance analysis of income and expenditure against budget
D		D2.2 Systems of feedback on performance at least annually D2.3 Training and development plans reviewed annually	D2.2 Performance appraisal at least annually D2.3 Training and development plans reviewed annually
E		E3.4 Results of central record review inform review of service performance	E2.6 File reviews are monitored at least annually
G	G2.2 Complaints reviewed annually	G2.2 Review all quality processes annually G3.2 Client feedback analysed annually G3.3 Review performance in light of feedback/complaints	G1.3 Central record of complaints reviewed annually G2.2 Client feedback reviewed at least annually G3.2 Quality processes reviewed annually

12.3 The service level review required by Assisted Information and General Help level requirement C2.1 can usefully feed into a review of the service strategy and can incorporate a number of the reviews listed above such as:

- information gathered from client feedback and complaints;

- signposting and referral statistics;
 - financial information.
- 12.4 This information can help you review whether the service you are offering is appropriate, for example:
- Have complaints indicated that opening hours do not suit users?
 - Have the most frequently referred types of cases indicated a training need or the need to revise your service levels?
 - Is your current level of financial support sufficient to support the existing service or do you need to consider restricting access?
- 12.5 There may also have been changes in the external environment, eg large-scale redundancies, which indicate a change in the needs of users.
- 12.6 The information from the service level review can be fed into your service strategy review. This will help to ensure that you address any changes that need to be made to your strategy to ensure future service delivery meets the needs of your target users.
- 12.7 There is also a benefit in linking up the reviews that concern workers' performance. For example, a summary of issues arising from file reviews should be included in appraisal or performance reviews (E3.2). Equally, appraisals can help inform training plans.

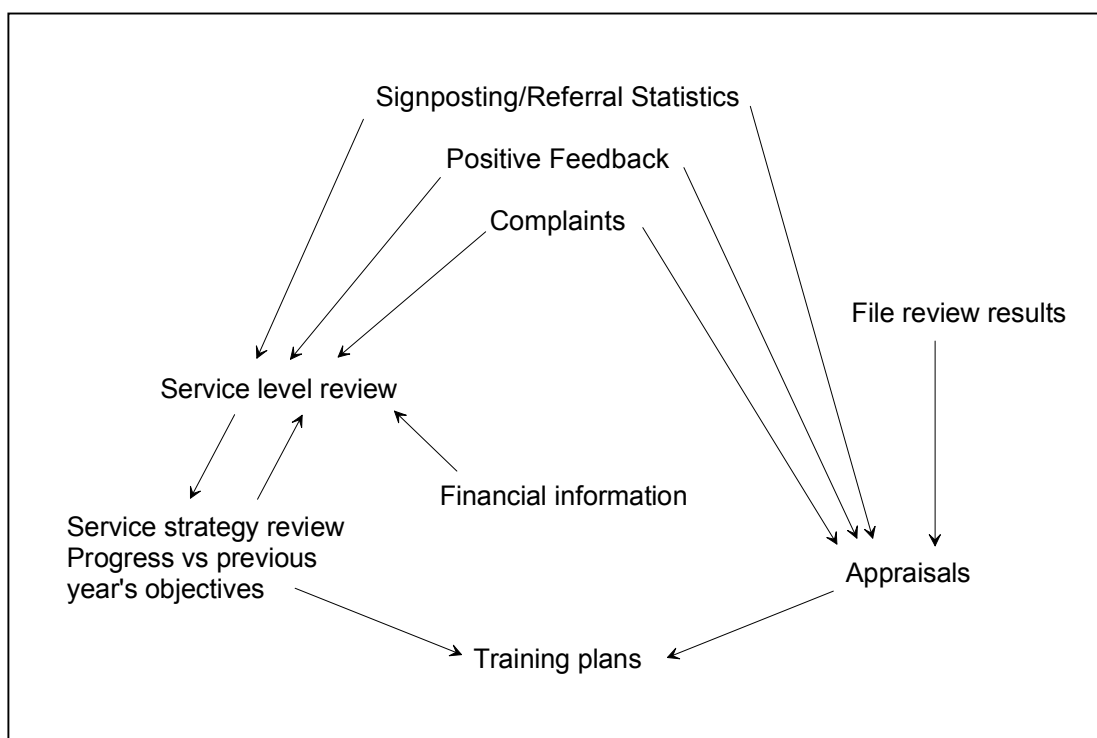
13 Reviewing the plan

- 13.1 The Quality Mark requires you to review your plan:
- every twelve months for General Help level services – *“in the light of the composition and needs of the local community”* (Requirement A1.2, Quality Mark standard, page 35);
 - every six months for Specialist level services: *“specific project, action proposals, finance and service targets **must** be reviewed (against actual performance) at least every six– months, while background information about the organisation, external influences, opportunities for development and clients **must** be reviewed at least annually.”* (Requirement A1.2 of the Specialist Quality Mark)
- 13.2 **Please note:** At Assisted Information level a new statement or plan needs to be written every year and therefore does not have to be reviewed. In practice, it is likely you will evaluate your existing annual plan as a basis for drafting the next year's plan.
- 13.3 Regardless of the Quality Mark level you are operating at, auditors will be looking for:
- records of the review;
 - evidence that you have attempted to pursue your objectives;
 - an explanation of why objectives have not been achieved and an action plan to address or modify the objectives.
- 13.4 It helps to start with a realistic plan. If you cannot identify any further developments for the service then don't put any in the plan – you will not be able to carry them out. If the organisation requires a period of consolidation you should ensure the plan reflects this.
- 13.5 When you come to review the plan ensure that the following points are addressed:
- Are your aims and objectives still relevant?

- Has the service level review indicated any new objectives for the next twelve months that need adding to the plan?
- Have your previous objectives been achieved? Document the reasons for any delays and consider revising timescales/deadlines if they are no longer achievable.
- Explain any additions to your plan – you may have added something during the year.
- Ensure that objectives for years two and three are still relevant and amend them if any internal or external factors have changed your view of the future.

14 Pulling the reviews together

- 14.1 The service level and service strategy reviews required for Assisted Information and General Help levels, along with the other reviews identified in section 14 of this briefing, will produce information that will need to be fed into other reviews.



- 14.2 It makes sense to perform all the reviews at the same time of year and you may wish to time reviews to fit in with your funding cycle.
- 14.3 Ensure that you document all reviews. Auditors will be looking for evidence that reviews have taken place and will also want to see evidence that decisions are based on justifiable reasons. It is useful to document any issues that are likely to have a significant impact on your plan and then be able to show that any changes made to your plan are as a result of this information.

15 Where can I get further help?

- 15.1 If you are interested in looking into the subject of planning in more detail, a useful introductory publication is *The Complete Guide to Business and Strategic Planning for Voluntary Organisations*² (further details are available from the Directory of Social Change, 24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP; tel: 020 7209 5151). A more detailed consideration of strategic planning (particularly business planning) is found in *Managing without Profit*.³
- 15.2 You can get help from your advice network, details of which are provided at the end of this briefing.
- 15.3 ASA's CLS Support project is available to help you with any questions you might have about the Quality Mark. This is one of a series of briefings dealing with specific aspects of the Quality Mark. We also provide a telephone and email consultancy service, details of which are provided at the end of this briefing.
- 15.4 You can also contact your LSC Regional Office. The role of LSC auditors includes the provision of advice and support at the application stage. If you aren't sure which office deals with your area, any Regional Office you contact should be able to direct you to the right one. Contact details are at the end of this briefing.

² Lawrie, Alan (second Edition 2001), Directory of Social Change.

³ Hudson, Mike (second Edition 2000), Penguin.

Appendix I: Sample Assisted Information Service Plan

Greenwood Community Centre Information Service

■ ANNUAL PLAN JAN 02 – DEC 02 ■

Introduction

Greenwood Community Centre Information Service was launched in April 2000. The service is currently under development, and from 2002 we will be seeking to identify dedicated funding to enhance it.

We are based in the Greenwood Community Centre, which provides a job club and access to computers, basic skills training, pre-school childcare, social activities, a credit union, a lunch club for elderly residents and a youth club. The information service is an important addition to these community facilities and is well used by the residents of the Greenwood estate. We operate an equal opportunities policy and take steps to ensure our service is accessible to all.

The service is currently staffed by the Centre administrators who report to the Centre Management Committee.

We provide a free, confidential, independent information service on a range of issues. The mission statement for the service is:

“To provide an information service which ensures local people are aware of their rights”

Client group served

The information service is available three mornings a week to residents of the Greenwood estate and beyond. There are plans to review service access times to ensure it is accessible to all. From our client monitoring figures we are aware men and women of all ages use the service. A large number of our clients are elderly or disabled.

The service is provided at the Centre's premises, and during opening hours face-to-face assistance is available from one of the administrators. Information leaflets and access to CLS Directories are available during the Centre opening hours (8am – 10pm daily) and people are encouraged to use these facilities.

The information service provides presentations to groups using the Centre, eg youth club and over 60s lunch club, on issues that affect them.

(ii)

Information needs

We provide information on welfare benefits – Income Support, disability benefits, Tax Credits and Housing Benefit. In 2001 we recorded 543 benefit enquiries. There is a high level of unemployment on the Greenwood estate following the pit closure programme ten years ago and many residents have disability and health problems arising from employment in the mining industry.

We provide information on housing, eg repairs, allocations and re-housing, and dealt with 280 housing information enquiries in 2001. These mainly concerned the re-allocation of residents to new homes following the demolition of a local tower block. As well as answering queries face-to-face the information service has produced leaflets and posters providing information on local housing issues.

We also provide information on homelessness and local hostels. We dealt with 76 homelessness enquiries in 2001.

We anticipate that local needs for our information service will continue. We are also aware that there has been a recent influx of asylum seekers to the area and we intend to offer an information service to meet their needs. Details of this possible development are included in our plan.

Aims for the forthcoming year

Aim	Target to be achieved	Responsibility/Timetable
<i>To identify and secure dedicated funds for the information service</i>	<i>To secure funds for a full-time information worker</i>	<i>Management Committee to draw up a list of potential funders and make applications by September 2002. Aim to secure funds that will come on stream by April 2003.</i>
<i>To provide an information service to families of asylum seekers</i>	<i>To establish main information needs To liaise with the local authority and Law Centre about providing leaflets in Albanian</i>	<i>Rita to monitor enquiries in January 2002 and report to Management Committee. Rita to contact LA & Law Centre re. possible translation and signposting service by March 2002.</i>
<i>To improve information facilities and monitoring of use</i>	<i>To review opening hours To identify funds for leaflet racks and stats software</i>	<i>Staff to present report to Management Committee Jan 2002 and implement from April 2004. Frank to identify sources of funding by March 2002.</i>

The Management Committee will review progress against this plan at monthly Management Committee meetings. Staff and Management Committee members will work on developing the plan for 2003 in October 2002.

Appendix II: Assisted Information Service Plan Template

Name of organisation

■ ANNUAL PLAN MONTH YEAR – MONTH YEAR ■

Introduction

Background information about the service – eg when it started, how many staff currently, and could include information required for service statement about services you currently provide.

Client group served

Describe which client group you serve, ie what geographical area you cover, or which target group your service is aimed at, eg young people or Somali refugees.

(iv)

Information needs

Include in this section a summary of data you have collected about your clients' needs, eg:

- Last year 74% of our enquiries were welfare benefits related.
- The unemployment rate has remained high since the closure of a local mine.
- Council figures show a large number of disabled people live on the estate.

Aims for the forthcoming year

List any plans you have to develop and/or enhance your service.

EXAMPLES:

- Make information leaflets on debt management available as a number of your clients have told you they have catalogue debts.
- Establish contact with the local Law Centre as a number of clients coming to see you last year needed help with benefit appeals.
- Extend opening hours to increase accessibility for the target/catchment group.

Aim	Target to be achieved	Responsibility/Timetable
To provide information on debt management	To stock DTI self-help debt packs	Staff or Management Committee member name/date by which should be in place
To establish signposting arrangement with Law Centre	Contact Law Centre and agree protocol	Staff or Management Committee member name/date by which should be in place
To extend opening hours	To identify funds for additional 3 hour session	Staff or Management Committee member name/date by which should be in place

Describe how you will use the plan and when/how it will be reviewed.

Appendix III: Sample Assisted Information A2 Statement



Greenwood Community Centre

INFORMATION SERVICE

The information service is open 10am – 1pm every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

**Visit the
reception
office at**

*Greenwood Community Centre
12 Eastwood Road
Greenwood
CS7 2DN*

**We can help you find out
more about:**

- ✓ **Income Support**
- ✓ **Disability benefits**
- ✓ **Tax Credits**
- ✓ **Housing Benefit**
- ✓ **Housing allocations**
- ✓ **Re-housing arrangements**
- ✓ **Homelessness information**

Rita or Frank are available to help you during the information service opening hours.

Outside these times you can pick up leaflets and use our copies of the Community Legal Service Directory to find details of other organisations that can help you further.

Appendix IV: Assisted Information A2 Statement Template

NB: THIS INFORMATION CAN BE INCORPORATED IN A1 STATEMENT/PLAN
OR PUBLICITY LEAFLET. PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT THE ORDER OF SECTIONS CAN BE VARIED.

Services provided

Describe what services you offer, ie the areas in which you provide information.

When services are provided

State your opening hours, and if you offer a telephone service include times this is available.

Where services are provided

State where your information service is delivered.

How services are provided

Describe the various ways you provide information – leaflets, face-to-face assistance, telephone, website, email.

Appendix V: Sample General Help Service Strategy

Banner Advice Centre

■ SERVICE STRATEGY YEAR 2002 – YEAR 2005 ■

Introduction

Banner Advice Centre (BAC) provides a casework-based advice service to the Banner Estate community. This service strategy was drawn up by Management Committee and staff members during October 2001.

In order to develop the strategy, we have reviewed current provision and the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and identified the opportunities and threats that BAC needs to address.

This strategy includes background details about BAC and a statement of our values. It also outlines how we intend to improve and develop our service.

Management Committee and staff will refer to this strategy whenever decisions on funding or the direction BAC takes are discussed and will review the progress of the advice service against the strategy every October. This review will take place at BAC's annual planning meeting and the strategy will be amended if necessary.

Summary

BAC was started in 1980 by local residents who recognised the need for an advice centre in the area. One of the strengths of BAC is our link with the local community, who continue to be involved in the management of the service.

BAC started with no funds and was originally run by volunteers. We now have six paid staff and operate with an annual budget of £300,000. BAC is in a strong position to develop further, having gained a reputation for effective casework. In 2000/01 we advised over 6,000 residents and gained £439,000 in unclaimed benefits for users.

The Centre provides a casework service in welfare benefits and debt. We also work with local groups to provide information on welfare benefits to local residents. Our mission statement is:

“BAC provides free, independent, quality advice to ensure that individuals and groups within the Banner community are able to access the rights and services they are entitled to.”

BAC is an unincorporated charity governed by a Management Committee drawn from the local community and other advice providers.

Aims and objectives

We aim to achieve our mission by working to the following aims which were revised by the Committee and staff in October 2001:

- *to ensure that the advice we provide to the local community is of a high quality;*
- *to provide support for individuals and groups to fully access local services;*
- *to work in partnership with other agencies to tackle local poverty.*

Values

We operate an equal opportunities policy. Our premises are fully wheelchair-accessible and have disabled toilet facilities. We are able to access interpreting services and offer a minicom service.

Our advice service is free of charge, confidential and independent of any funder or outside agency.

We work closely with the local community and are committed to acting as a community resource to individuals and groups within our area through the provision of photocopying and printing facilities.

Community profile

Banner Estate is in the Bridge House ward and 89% of our clients live on Banner itself. Bridge House ward is within the most deprived 10% of wards in the country (DETR Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000).

The Banner population is 43% white, 32% Turkish, 15% Kurdish and 10% other ethnic groups. Two of our workers speak Turkish and our client profile shows that our users are representative of this demographic profile.

Banner Estate has a high percentage of young people – 30% of the estate's residents are under 16. Our client profile shows that BAC does not advise many young people and our service strategy includes our plans to address this gap.

Unemployment levels are high at 13%, and 65% of adults on the estate are eligible to receive benefits. 87% of families receive free school meals and 41% owe Council Tax arrears of an average of £350.

A report commissioned by the local authority reports high unemployment, poor housing (housing is predominantly local authority owned) and lack of local amenities – the nearest town is five miles away.

The local Community Legal Service Partnership reports a need for welfare benefits, debt and housing advice, and BAC are the only not-for-profit organisation in the area that offers casework in welfare benefits and debt.

Client groups to be served

Our service is aimed at people with low incomes facing deprivation and disadvantage. It is BAC's policy not to advise employers or landlords.

We prioritise working with groups such as local tenants' associations to provide information on benefit entitlements.

We intend to work in partnership with other organisations to develop services to groups who are under-represented in our client profile, eg young people.

Services provided

We offer the following advice service from our premises at Tanner Road:

Subject area	Quality Mark level	Supervisor
<i>Welfare Benefits</i>	<i>General Help with Casework</i>	<i>Ruyam Arkut</i>
<i>Debt</i>	<i>General Help with Casework</i>	<i>Martin Greavy</i>

Clients requiring advice in other areas, eg housing or family, are signposted to other Community Legal Service providers in the area.

We have six advice workers in total. All are full-time and each has a minimum of two years experience of providing advice. We operate a collective structure. Our co-ordinator is Seema Hussain, who is also the Centre's Quality Mark representative.

We are accessible to the public at the following times:

Open door

Monday – Friday: 9am – 11am

Appointments

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 2pm – 4pm

Telephone/Minicom

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: 12 noon – 2pm

We also offer home visits.

(xi)

Funding

We have been funded by the local authority for the last twelve years. Our grant for 2000/01 was £300,000.

We are aware of the need to diversify our funding sources and plan to address this in years two and three of this strategy.

Proposed enhanced and new services

Our SWOT and STEP analysis (see the next section) identified the need to develop a service for young people. We do not have the expertise to offer this service without outside support, and therefore intend to investigate the possibility of working in partnership with Banner Focus on Youth.

Other than this development the Management Committee and staff agree it is important to consolidate the present service.

Proposed developments for the next 12 months

The SWOT and STEP analysis for BAC identified the following factors:

Strengths – committed staff team, strong links with local community, profile with local councillors and MP, high success rate in recovering unpaid benefit.

Weaknesses and Threats – IT (only two computers and no access to internet,) Management Committee unincorporated and often inquorate, Centre solely dependent on local authority funding, service not responding to all community needs, Best Value agenda, collective structure viewed as outdated,

Opportunities – CLS and contracting, increased recognition of poverty within the area therefore possibility of regeneration monies, opportunity for partnership with client-specific organisations, ie local youth agency, to broaden range of services.

We have incorporated these points into our strategy with the following action plan for the first year:

Identified objectives	Tasks	Resources required	How we will monitor	Responsibility/ Timescale
To conduct review of management & governance systems	To draw up specification To tender for independent review	Attendance at meeting Identify funds	Report to MC Securing funds	MC and SH by 02/02 MC & SH by 03/02
To achieve the Quality Mark	To undertake audit of current practice and develop action plan To train staff in new procedures	One staff member One staff member and time for workers to attend training	QM application submitted Lead member to review compliance with procedures	DT by 31/01/02 DT by 03/02
To explore potential new service for young people	Talk to youth agency re. potential outreach or partnership Identify funding for service	MC and staff member to meet with youth agency Staff member to identify and submit bid	Report to MC MC to sign off any applications	MC & TY by 09/02 TY by 12/02

Long-term developments

The aims for the next three years to be addressed over years 2 and 3 are:

- *to identify a funding strategy and diversify funding sources;*
- *to introduce an IT strategy including a BAC website;*
- *to monitor regeneration and Best Value agenda and respond to opportunities.*

Funding strategy

The Service Level Agreement with the local authority runs for a further two years before it will be reviewed. This strategy is drawn up on the assumption that core funds are secure in the short term.

However, the strategy recognises that BAC will need to diversify funding and so the first-year plans are aimed at strengthening the organisation by achieving the Quality Mark, reviewing the governance structure and exploring a new youth advice service.

The Management Committee will start to work on a funding strategy in year 2. In the meantime BAC is involved in forums such as the local CLSP and regeneration forum and will identify and work to secure new funding opportunities.

Review

The co-ordinator's report to the Management Committee will detail any new opportunities and threats that affect this strategy, and the Management Committee will consider if any revisions are necessary.

The staff and Management Committee will review this plan in October 2002 against progress reports and the published regional strategies of the Regional Legal Services Committee and the local CLSP.

Appendix VI: General Help Service Strategy Template

Name of organisation

▪ SERVICE STRATEGY YEAR 01 – YEAR 03 ▪

Introduction

Describe what the strategy covers, who was involved in drawing it up and what tools and information were used.

Describe when and how the strategy will be reviewed and how the organisation will use the strategy.

Summary

Provide an overview of the history of the organisation and summarise its strengths. Give a general introduction to the services you provide.

If your organisation has a mission statement, include it here.

Describe the status of the organisation, eg Charity or Company Limited by Guarantee.

Aims and objectives

Summarise the aims and objectives of the organisation, eg:

We aim to achieve our mission by:

- *providing a quality advice service to the people of;*
- *identifying and highlighting the needs of the community;*
- *informing policy makers to ensure appropriate service delivery.*

Values

List the values that influence your organisation. These might include:

- Equal opportunities, including physical access and other access issues
- Confidentiality
- Free service
- Non-judgemental approach with clients
- User involvement

Community profile

Describe the community within your geographical catchment area/target groups.

Include information which shows you are aware of their needs, eg:

- poverty indicators;
- housing provision;
- rates of employment;
- disability, language and other access issues/client group-specific needs.

Client groups to be served

Include information on who you have decided to target services at and why, eg you might have chosen to have a generalist service open to the entire local community and include an evening session because you are aware of a high number of low-paid service industry workers in the area who cannot access advice services held during the day due to work commitments.

Services provided

Describe your main types of service delivery.

List the areas in which you provide advice, eg welfare benefits, housing, employment etc. It is useful to describe the specific aspects of your advice service in terms of Quality Mark levels:

General Help with Casework	Housing and Welfare Benefits
General Help	Employment
Assisted Information	Immigration

For any work you carry out at General Help with Casework level, you will need to identify the caseworkers carrying out the work (D5.1) or the name of the casework supervisor (D5.2).

Describe how and when you deliver services – open door, appointments, telephone, email, letter, group work, home visits, outreach (including opening hours/access times for services).

Include data on current usage of services.

Funding

Outline the current funding arrangements for the services.

Proposed enhanced and new services

Describe how you have identified any developments for the service, eg via SWOT analysis, discussion with users, negotiation with funders.

Proposed developments for the next 12 months

Present in table form:

Identified objectives	Task(s)	Resources required	How we will monitor	Responsibility/timescale

Long-term developments

List any longer-term developments you intend to pursue, ie over years 2 and 3. If you have completed a STEP analysis, draw on results to identify potential longer-term developments.

Funding strategy

Outline how you will fund the developments you have identified.

Include:

- an analysis of existing funds – are they secure, when do project funds end;
- opportunities for new funding;
- how you might raise funds via other means – eg events, income-generating services.

Review

Detail how you will review the plan. This might include:

- an annual review of service delivery;
- collecting data on ongoing basis of opportunities for the organisation
- a date for review.

You can include taking account of published regional strategies (Regional Legal Services Committees and Community Legal Service Partnerships) – Guidance A1.2.

Appendix VII: Summary table of Quality Mark planning requirements (all levels)

The table that follows on the next page provides a summary of Quality Mark planning requirements at all levels regarding:

- the written document to be produced;
- the period of time the document should cover;
- the content of the document outlined in Quality Mark guidance – which is not mandatory;
- the specified interval for reviews of the document.

4.14 Summary table of evidence requirements at Assisted Information, General Help and Specialist levels

Quality Mark Standard	Assisted Information	General Help	Specialist
Document specified by Quality Mark requirements	<p>Plan or statement of what the organisation aims to achieve (A1.1)</p> <p>A statement outlining what services will be delivered to meet identified needs and problems and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ when ○ where ○ how <p>they will be made available (A1.2).</p>	<p>Written strategy that sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ key objectives or core values and principles; ○ what the organisation aims to achieve (A1.1); ○ the type of services provided, including casework if offered; ○ skills & resources to deliver the strategy (A1.2). 	<p>Business plan that sets out key objectives of the organisation (A1.1) and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is relevant to organisation's aims and objectives (A1.1); ○ provides details about how each item is going to be achieved (A1.1).
Specified coverage	Current year (A1.1)	In detail for the following 12 months and, in outline, for a further 2 years ahead (A1.1).	In detail for the current year, and in outline for the following 2 years (A1.1).
Content outlined in Quality Mark	No further requirements or guidance regarding specific content of plan/statement.	<p>NB. This list is guidance and NOT mandatory.</p> <p>Community profile and needs</p> <p>Client groups to be served</p> <p>Service aims and objectives</p> <p>Main types of service delivery</p> <p>Proposed enhanced and new services</p> <p>Approaches to service delivery</p> <p>Funding strategy</p> <p>Ensuring equal opportunities and physical access</p> <p>If deliver casework you should identify caseworkers or the name of the casework supervisor</p> <p>(A1.1 guidance pages 35 and 36 Quality Mark standard)</p>	<p>NB This list is mandatory.</p> <p>Client groups to be served/market intend to target</p> <p>Services to be delivered – field of law, levels and types of work</p> <p>Open hours and access arrangements</p> <p>Summary of caseworkers' areas of expertise and professional/legal qualification</p> <p>Finance/plan/budget</p> <p>SWOT analysis (from October 2002)</p> <p>Service promotion (from October 2002)</p> <p>(A1.1 Definitions page 25 Specialist Quality Mark standard)</p>
Review	No specified interval for review is given, but a new plan must be provided each year.	The service strategy should be reviewed at least every 12 months in the light of the composition and needs of the local community (A1.2).	The business plan is reviewed at least six monthly , and a record of that review is kept (A1.2).

Getting further help

Network contacts

community legal service



Management Helpline DIAL UK St Catherine's Hospital Tickhill Road, Balby Doncaster DN4 8QN 01302 310123	James Kenrick Youth Access 1a Taylors Yard Alderbrook Road London SW12 8AD 020 8772 9900
John Mulligan Federation of Information and Advice Services 4 Deans Court St Paul's Churchyard London EC4V 5AA 020 7489 1800	National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux Myddelton House 115-123 Pentonville Road London N1 9LZ Bureau Management Consultancy Line 0845 120 2035 CLS Consultancy Line 020 7833 7046/7134
Law Centres Federation 18-19 Warren Street London W1P 5DB 020 7387 8570	Tricia Euston Shelter 3 rd Floor, Ludgate Chambers Ludgate Hill Leeds LS2 7HZ 0113 2455030
JJ Costello Shelter Cymru 25 Walter Road Swansea SA1 5NN 01792 469400	John Edwards Age Concern England 1268 London Road London SW16 4ER 020 8765 7468

Legal Services Commission contacts

You can also contact your regional LSC office. If you aren't sure which area you are in, any regional office should be able to direct you to the one for your area. For queries about the Quality Mark **only**, you can email the LSC at sdg.issues@legalservices.gov.uk.

London Regional Office 29/37 Red Lion Street London WC1R 4PP 020 7759 1500	North Western Regional Office 2nd Floor, Elisabeth House 16 St Peter Square Manchester M2 3DA 0161 244 5000
South Eastern Regional Office 3rd/4th Floor Invicta House Trafalgar House Brighton BN1 4FR 01273 878800	North Eastern Regional Office Eagle Star House Fenkle Street Newcastle NE1 5RU 0191 244 5800
Southern Regional Office 80 King's Road Reading RG1 4LT 0118 955 8600	Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Office City House New Station Road Leeds LS1 4JS 0113 390 7300
South Western Regional Office 33/35 Queens Square Bristol BS1 4LU 0117 302 3000	East Midlands Regional Office Fothergill House 16 King Street Nottingham NG1 2AS 0115 908 4200
Wales Regional Office Marland House Central Square Cardiff CF1 1PF 029 2064 7100	Eastern Regional Office 62-68 Hills Road Cambridge CB2 1LA 01223 417800
West Midlands Regional Office City Centre Podium 5 Hill Street Birmingham B5 4UD 0121 665 4700	Merseyside Regional Office Cavern Walks 8 Mathew Street Liverpool L2 6RE 0151 242 5200



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Project Consultant: Audrey MacDonald
Project Consultant: Patrick Torsney

Advice Services Alliance
4 Deans Court
St Paul's Churchyard
London EC4V 5AA

www.asauk.org.uk
Fax: 020 7248 3367

Telephone and email consultancy

Consultancy line: 0870 7700 447

Email: cls.support@asauk.org.uk

The line will be open at the following times:

Monday	3 pm – 5 pm
Tuesday	10 am – 12 pm
Wednesday	10 am – 12 pm
Thursday	10 am – 12 pm

Consultancy will be provided to individual agencies on issues relating to the Quality Mark. We will be able to advise agencies that have applied, or are considering applying for the Quality Mark, with the focus being on issues relating to the General Help level and above. We will also be able to advise on Legal Aid General Civil Contracts. Our intention is to tailor our support as closely as possible to the nature and requirements of individual agencies.

The consultancy line is staffed by the project advisers, who will answer enquiries at first contact wherever possible. Where further research needs to be carried out in order to answer an enquiry, callers will be informed when they are likely to receive a reply and will be contacted at that time for an update if a full response is still not possible. The project advisers will aim to send any further written information to enquirers within five working days.

Training and Seminars

CLS Support provides training and seminars on both Quality Mark and contracting issues. For further information, including details of costs, please either contact us on the consultancy line or log on to our website.

Briefings

Our current programme of briefings is listed on the following page. Quality Mark briefings will deal with requirements at all Quality Mark levels to which the briefing topic relates. The order of priority of briefings is subject to consultation with subscribers – please complete and return the attached briefings feedback form to give us your views.

The Legal Services Commission has agreed to subsidise the cost of briefings initially. Currently therefore, briefings will be free to Not-for-Profit organisations who are members of the major advice networks, while private solicitors, non-networked organisations and local authorities will be required to pay a subscription fee.

Email and Internet

You can also send your enquiries by email. A project adviser will respond to you within five working days. We request that you include a contact telephone number with your enquiry so we can call you back to obtain further information if necessary.

The ASA website includes a What's New page with Quality Mark and contracting updates, access to electronic versions of a limited number of our briefings, and details of our current training courses.

Briefings

Series 1: The Quality Mark

1	Introduction to the Quality Mark
2	Client Feedback
3	Independent File Review
4	Conflict of Interest
5	Service Planning
	<i>Sample procedures at General Help level</i>
	<i>Signposting and referral</i>
	<i>Case management and client care</i>
	<i>File Management</i>
	<i>Information Provision</i>

Series 2: The General Civil Contract

1	Separate matters and Work that can count against contracts
2	Contract reporting arrangements – SPAN
3	Changes to Eligibility
	<i>Disbursements</i>
	<i>LSC Funding and VAT</i>
	<i>The Contract</i>
	<i>Employing a solicitor for the first time</i>

Please note that the titles in italics are not yet published. Both the running order and the titles themselves are subject to alteration. We aim to respond to the changing priorities and needs of our readers as identified from any feedback received. We will also take into account any new developments in the Quality Mark.

Franchising Support Project Briefings

A limited number of the following briefings published by the Franchising Support Project are still available. When current stocks run out, they will not be reprinted, as they will be superseded by the CLS Support briefings listed above.

Not for Profit Sector Briefings – all of these are correct as at date published

- No. 7 The Contract Rules**
- No. 9 General Civil Contract: the Framework – The Access to Justice Act 1999
- No. 10 Funding Code and Other Levels of Service

New Agency (Phase Two Pilot) Briefings – although out of date these still contain relevant points

- No. 24 The Contract**
- No. 26 Survey Findings: the transition to block contracting and BriefCase

** These briefings are only applicable to agencies that have, or are applying for, the Specialist Help Quality Mark*

*** These briefings are only applicable to agencies who have, or are applying for, a CLS fund contract*

BRIEFING FEEDBACK SHEET
CLS Support Project Quality Mark Briefing No. 5



Please let us have your views on this briefing and whether there are other aspects of the Quality Mark , General Civil Contracts or the Community Legal Service on which you would like more briefings. Feedback from your organisation will help us make future briefings as relevant and easy to follow as possible.

Did you find this briefing helpful?.....
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Do you have suggestions for any changes that might have made it more useful to you?
If yes, please specify:

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Were there issues that you expected to be covered in this briefing and about which you want to know more? If yes, please say what these are:

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.....

Are there other aspects of the Quality Mark, General Civil Contracts or the Community Legal Service on which future briefings would be useful?
If yes, please list below in order of importance:

.....
.....
.....

Your name:..... Tel:

Email:.....

Name/address of your agency:

Please return to: Advice Services Alliance, CLS Support Project, 4 Deans Court, St Paul's Churchyard, London EC4V 5AA or email cls.support@asauk.org.uk subject line " Quality Mark Briefing No. 5 Feedback"