A QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOR PERFORMANCE MONITORING OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

NOVEMBER 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pursuit of continuous improvement of quality of an organisation and its services, and the experience thereof by service recipients, is at the heart of this Quality Assurance Framework.

A Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) can be regarded as an organising mechanism and a single point of reference to enable systematic quality management.

This Framework acknowledges the need for different types of monitoring which the Department of Social Development (DSD) will continue to do, but proposes that comprehensive performance monitoring through a quality lens (also known as quality assurance) be the preferred approach to monitoring of social welfare and community development services. Comprehensive performance monitoring is best done against standards and where this does not exist, quality standards should be developed.

It also acknowledges that there are other assurance mechanisms within government which, whilst primarily performing a compliance and oversight function, can nevertheless contribute to the overall drive for quality improvement.

Successful implementation of quality assurance is dependent on, amongst others, an environment and culture that prioritises quality and the pursuit thereof and has supporting policies, procedures and mechanisms in place.

The approach to, and process of conducting quality assurance is a developmental one over a 2-5 year cycle depending on the size and complexity of the programme, by trained staff, against standards, using the same tools for the same type of monitoring, and must be uniformly applied by all service delivery programmes within the department.

The Framework can and must apply equally to own services although the institutional mechanisms for doing so must be confirmed and the tools may have to be adapted.

Operating within a quality assurance framework has multiple benefits, not least of which is that it facilitates ongoing identification of quality problems and possible ways to resolve them; it enhances transparency and organisational credibility; it supports a quality culture within an organisation.

The Quality Assurance Framework and its implementation will be monitored and reviewed at least annually for the first two years and thereafter as required, to respond to changing circumstances.

Ultimately, the findings of the quality assurance that is conducted must inform whether the department will register, designate or licence organisations or their programmes.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The Department of Social development is committed to establishing and sustaining an environment where those we serve are safe, protected and cared for, have access to opportunities, enjoy a good quality of life and where all can achieve their potential. This commitment will be supported by high quality services and robust quality assurance arrangements.

This requires that we have a framework which defines the standards of service excellence we require of service delivery and how it should be monitored and managed. It furthermore requires a commitment from leadership to inculcate a culture of continuous improvement through quality performance management, monitoring and reporting by a competent workforce.

Based on the above the DSD has identified the need for a QA framework to be developed and tested in programmes, and approved as a policy document by March 2016 for uniform implementation from the 2016/17 financial year.

Whilst the focus of the framework is on quality improvement in services delivered by NGOs, the need for a dedicated focus on quality in programme management cannot within be lost sight of and as such, this framework can also be used to monitor own services.

This document must be read in conjunction with the National Quality Assurance Framework for Social Welfare Services.

2.   QUALITY ASSURANCE AND A QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

A number of different assurance mechanisms exist within the different levels and spheres of government. At provincial level these mechanisms include, but are not limited to the office of the Auditor-General, Audit Committees, Internal Audit, Internal Control and various

parliamentary committees such as the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. They primarily perform a financial and service delivery oversight and compliance function. Whilst their findings can serves to strengthen quality, it differs from and cannot replace the quality assurance process discussed in this framework.

Quality assurance can be defined as the activities aimed at setting standards and a process of verifying whether services meet the required standards and customer expectations. The latter is achieved through continuous monitoring and improving including the development and monitoring of service delivery improvement plans. It involves a continuous process of reflection, assessment and improvement of policy and practice to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers who was deeply involved in the testing of quality assurance processes during the period of the Transformation of the Child and Youth Care System during the late 1990's, defines quality assurance as " *a continuous process of review and improvement built into the design and operation of an organisation. It involves an examination of all aspects of the system, including objectives, structures, processes and outcomes. It focuses on the experiences of the consumers/clients, as a critical part of the review.*"

The management of quality as part of an organisation's formal management system and approach to organisational competence, as well as the policies , processes, procedures, standards and systems applied in the systematic mentoring and monitoring of services to enable raising of standards constitutes the quality assurance framework. Essentially it defines what quality in social welfare and community development services is, how it will be measured and how evidence will be collected to enable measurement.

3.   **PURPOSE OF A QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK**

Within the context of social welfare and community development services, a Q A framework can help ensure respect for human rights, promote social justice, create opportunities for the development of practitioners and ensure the effectiveness and efficient delivery of social welfare services.

This framework can also serve as a basis for guiding and supporting a service providers' commitment to excellence and to working towards established measurable standards of quality.

More specifically, the framework can serve to:

- Improve outcomes for service users as well as their involvement in the organisation
- Design quality into services through practice standards
- Ensure services are achieving consistently high standards
- Embed an organisational culture committed to learning and continual improvement
- Improve the levels of feedback on quality of services for service users and staff
- Create better working practices and policies

If consistently applied, a Q A framework can promote and support continuous improvement and good governance.

4.   SCOPE OF APPLICABILITY

The focus of the Framework applies to NGOs funded by DSD to deliver social welfare services, including community development services. However, even services not funded by DSD must be monitored to ensure compliance with legislation.

It can also be used to monitor own services although some of the tools may have to be adapted for this purpose.

5.   LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY MANDATE

The mandates for quality improvement are contained in a number of legal and policy instruments. The Children's Act Section, specifically Section 211 and Regulation 89 deals with quality assurance against norms and standards in respect of child and youth care centres. Norms and standards for Early Childhood Development and other child protection services are also regulated. The Older Persons Act contains norms and standards for services to older persons whilst the norms and standards for other service fields (programmes) such as Shelters for Abused Women, Social Crime Prevention and Substance Abuse, are prescribed in national policy guidelines. In still other instances service fields/programmes such as Shelters for Homeless Adults have developed their own norms and standards whilst the Disability programme is in the process of doing so. There is currently also a

national process underway to develop norms and standards for Community Development services.

In summary then, most service fields /programmes have or are in the process of developing norms and standards.

See **annexure A.**

6. **BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND QA**

Following a period of robust legislative reform in South Africa after 1994, many of the new pieces of legislation and policy make reference to improving quality through established norms and standards and through monitoring and quality assurance. For example, the White Paper on Social Welfare states that Government has the responsibility to determine and regularly review guidelines for the promotion and management of quality social welfare services.

In addition to this, three other important processes contributed to the shaping of quality developmental social services: the introduction of the ISDM in 2005, generic norms and standards in 2006 and the Quality Assurance Framework for Social Welfare Services in 2012. The ISDM presents a comprehensive integrated service delivery system for social welfare services, the generic norms and standards identify and guide the delivery of value in all activities and provide a basis for effectiveness in service delivery and the QA Framework defines standards of excellence. These are all related and have as a main aim the improvement of service delivery.

Quality assurance thus consists of two dimensions namely, the objective dimension which refers to the degree of compliance with the requirement of legislative and policy requirements and the subjective dimension which focusses on the beneficiaries' perceived value of the service.

Total Quality Management is a philosophy and a set of guiding principles as well as a strategic integrated management system and forms the foundation of a learning organisation. TQM places a great emphasis on customer-first orientation in very much the same manner as is emphasised through the Batho Pele principles, an initiative to get public servants to be service orientated, to strive for excellence in

service delivery and to commit to continuous service delivery improvement.

The unique nature of service organisations has given rise to the concept of <u>Total Quality Services</u> which compels service orgs to critically examine their service delivery internally so as to improve customer satisfaction.

6.1 Quality Assurance and Performance Management

Quality essentially measures how much we did, how well we did it and whether people are better off as a result of our interventions. As such it tends to focus on activity rather than service outcomes. Performance management on the other hand tends to focus not only on how well we did, but what we need to improve and what change needs to be brought about.

It is important for quality and performance management to be integrated. In order to measure performance and deliver quality services objective ways are needed as to how to assess how well DSD programmes and the NGOs funded by them are performing. *This framework serves to integrate the two.*

6.2 Monitoring within DSD

In 2003 the DSD established a Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) directorate with the purpose of conducting on-site monitoring of the performance of NPOs. Parallel to these processes were the activities of programmes around monitoring the implementation of norms and norms and standards, where these exist and to the extent that programmes were able to do so given capacity constraints. A number of organisational challenges with this particular model resulted in the monitoring function being integrated into the various programmes in 2013.

In 2013 a first attempt was also made by the responsible programme to conduct quality assurance in compliance with the Children's Act, at selected NGO managed child and youth care centres who agreed to be part of a pilot project. Teams were trained and quality assurance was conducted at 4 child and youth care centres. This pilot project was however terminated prior to completion due to policy changes within the department, but it resulted in a review of the monitoring tool

and its alignment to the Children's Act. Valuable lessons were also learnt, especially about the need to prioritise norms and standards.

During this period there was also a renewed emphasis at the national level on quality and the development of a national Quality Assurance Framework for monitoring organisational performance in respect of service delivery.

With the implementation of a new organisational model in May 2014 where M+E has been integrated into the programmes, each programme will have a multi-disciplinary team consisting of Assistant Directors, M+E officers and, where appropriate because of statutory mandates, Social Workers who will be responsible for conducting comprehensive performance monitoring which includes monitoring of norms and standards (quality). This requires a mind shift in the approach to performance management, approach to monitoring and a review of the existing monitoring tools.

It also requires that the monitoring function be consistently applied by all programmes throughout the department. The QA framework will facilitate this.

7. **WHY QUALITY ASSURANCE IS NECESSARY**

A Quality Assurance Framework provides a useful organising tool and a single place to record and reference the full range of quality concepts, tools, policies and practises. Within the context of service delivery, Quality Assurance is necessary and important because it:

- Ensures legislation and policy instruments are upheld and reflected in practises and at all levels of the service delivery system
- Ensures service users receive an efficient and effective service and are satisfied with the quality thereof
- Helps to identify service delivery challenges
- Helps to ensure that financial and other resources are efficiently and effectively managed
- Enables the organisation as well as the DSD to take decisive and appropriate action if any of the above is not in place and has been violated.

8.   BENEFITS OF A QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

There are a number of benefits to having a QA framework in place, some of which include the following:

- It provides a systematic mechanism for facilitating the on-going identification of quality problems and possible actions for their resolution. At the same time, it serves to stimulate and maximize the interaction among staff throughout the organization;
- It gives greater transparency to the processes by which quality is assured and reinforces the image of the organisation;
- It provides a basis for creating and maintaining a quality culture within the organization and contains reference material that can be helpful for training;
- It supports quality improvements and their maintenance over time;

9.   A NEW APPROACH TO COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE MONITORING OR CONDUCTING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN DSD

Currently, the following types of monitoring are conducted:

Type of monitoring	Description
Desk-top monitoring	Assessment of NGO quarterly progress reports and follow up if required
	Assessment of NGO Service Delivery Improvement Plan progress report and follow up if required
On-site monitoring	Rapid Response following a complaint about an NGO , or a concern raised by a programme
	Service Delivery Improvement Plan follow-up where progress is unsatisfactory
	Performance monitoring aimed at tracking performance of NGO against a TPA. Prioritised based on performance status
	Pre-funding assessments of new applications aimed at assessing the capacity of NGOs to deliver should they be funded

Whilst the above types of monitoring will continue to be done as and when the need arises, the focus on continuous quality improvement by both internal and external partners, as well as statutory requirements to, for example conduct quality assurance on services where there are

norms and standards, has necessitated a new approach to comprehensive performance monitoring, more commonly referred to as quality assurance.

Commitment to QA begins with top managers who are committed to quality expectations, This commitment on the part of top managers and their on-going work to make quality a priority is one of the major shifts necessary in moving from a compliance monitoring focus to one of quality improvement (A framework for QA in Child Welfare US Department of Health and Human Services).

The major difference between this and other types of monitoring that the department currently conducts is that an organisation and its services are measured against standards, the organisation to be quality assured does its own internal assessment using the same measuring tools as the external or departmental team, and the views of service beneficiaries i.e. clients, their families or caregivers are also canvassed.

In the context of social welfare service delivery, national government increasingly plays a role in setting service standards. Where these do not exist, nothing however precludes a provincial department from developing standards in consultation with service delivery partners in its particular sector.

In order for this Quality Assurance Framework to apply equally to comprehensive monitoring of own/DSD services, the institutional arrangements for doing so must be put in place.

Quality Assurance is underpinned by a number of key principles and assumptions which include:

- Everyone in the organisation is responsible for quality and ensuring its ongoing improvement.
- The organisation is committed to delivering the best outcomes for their service users, but the primary responsibility will always be with those who deliver front line services.
- The delivery of good outcomes will always take precedence over a focus on process or outputs but both are important in the delivery of services Service providers and users are partners in the provision of quality services.
- Effective services are characterised by a healthy tension in the system between those responsible for delivering the services and those who have a scrutinising and oversight role.

- Concentrating on quality helps to focus resources.

Ultimately, the results of the quality assurance process conducted at an organisation should inform if that organisation should be registered, designated, accredited or licenced in terms of legislation, to perform the services they wish to perform. This is not presently the case, but it is a goal towards which to strive.

9.1   BASKET OF TOOLS

A basket of tools exists, consisting of individual tools for every type of monitoring as listed above. This basket of tools will be supplemented by additional ones such as reporting and other templates, checklists and the like.

The approach advocated in this Framework is that all programmes/services must utilize the same tools for the same kind of monitoring i.e. everyone must use the same tool for rapid monitoring or the same pre funding assessment tool when doing this kind of monitoring. The norms and standards will of course differ for the different programmes/services, but they can and should be identical for those aspects pertaining to general governance and financial matters.

The reviewed comprehensive performance monitoring tool is attached in **Annexure B.**

9.2   QUALITY ASSURANCE TIME CYCLES AND PLANS

Programmes vary in size, scope, complexity and number of norms and standards, and these constitute the determinants of the cycle (frequency) of comprehensive monitoring (QA).

The C.A advocates that quality assurance be conducted at pre-determined intervals and in the case of child and youth care centres; it is a 3 year cycle. This means that every facility must undergo a quality assurance process at least once every 3 years. This however is the only programme for which there is a statutory mandate in terms of the cycle.

Given this scenario, the Framework proposes a 2-5 year comprehensive performance monitoring cycle.

Each programmes or region can determine their monitoring cycle, based on size and scope, complexity and number of norms and standards to be monitored.

Where there are extensive norms and standards, a programme or service may also choose to prioritise their norms and standards (some work has been done in this regard in respect of ECD) and allocate a rating.

Each programme or region must however develop and sign off on their multi-year monitoring plans, and these can and should as far as possible be arranged/prioritised on the basis of risk. A degree of flexibility is therefore required e.g. an entity or organisation may be earmarked for quality assurance in year three, but circumstances warrant that it be shifted to year 1 or two. The annual monitoring plan must therefore be updated to accommodate any changes that are made.

Programmes also need to find creative ways of co-ordinating the monitoring of NGOs funded by more than one programme.

This 2-5 year cycle will be supported or supplemented by other types of monitoring

9.3 QA CYCLE AND PROCESS

9.3.1 Cycle

The process advocated in the Children's Act (C.A.) as well as the National Policy Framework on Quality Assurance in respect of quality assurance for child and youth care centres will be adopted as it will serve to standardise the way in which comprehensive performance monitoring or quality assurance is conducted within the department.

The QA cycle can be illustrated as follows:
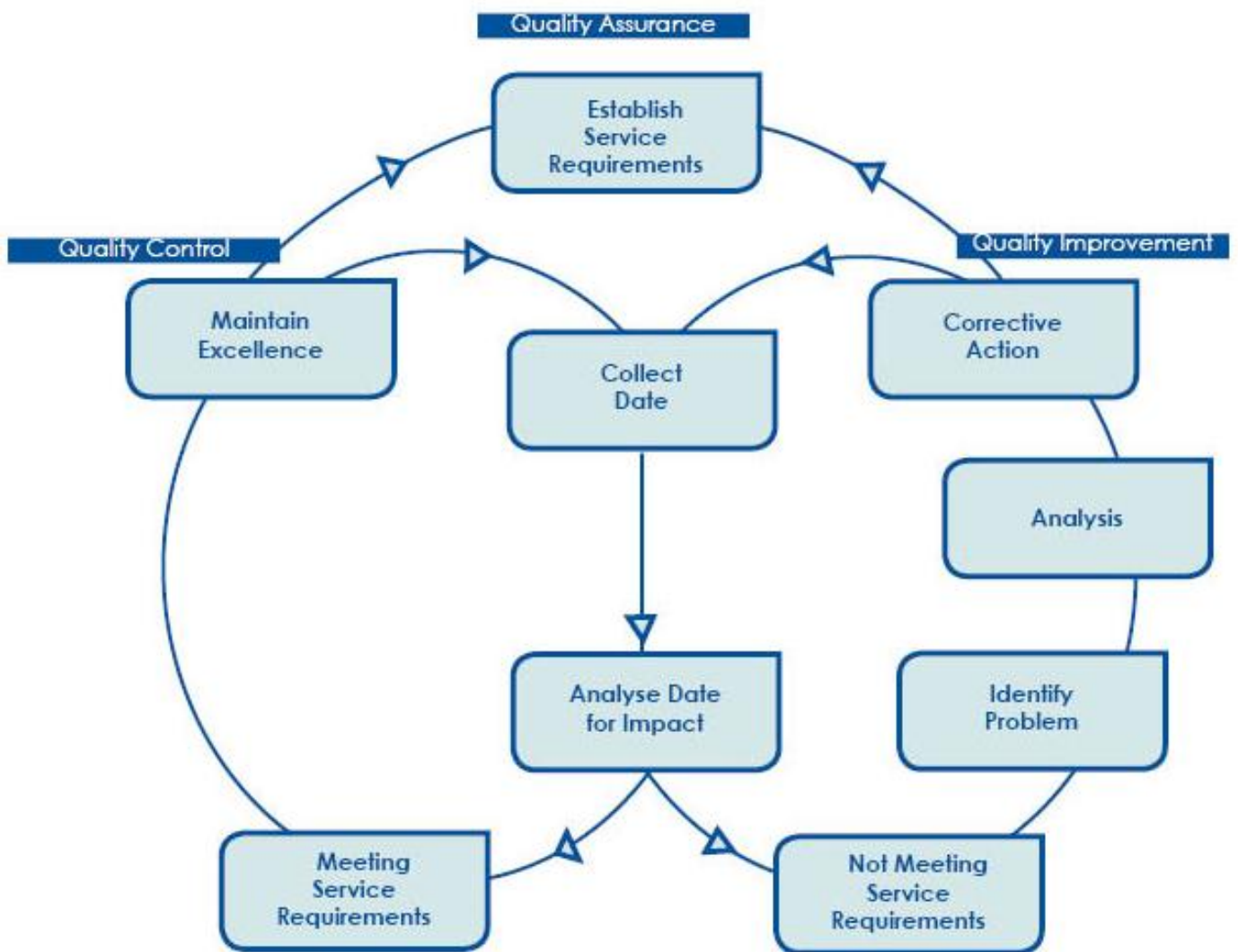
9.3.2 Process

The process is dual in nature and consists of an internal assessment by the NPO and an assessment by a DSD team. The activities within the QA process are tabled below.

ACTIVITY	TIME-FRAME
Prior written notification by DSD to NPO of intention to conduct QA and request submission of internal assessment	3-4 weeks before on-site
NPO appoints team to conduct internal QA	1 week after notification
NPO conducts internal assessment (QA) and submits to DSD	2 weeks after notification
DSD appoints own team to conduct QA as well as QA team leader (in writing) where statutory mandate requires it	2-3 weeks before QA on-site
DSD QA team prepares prior to conducting the QA	2-3 weeks before QA on-site
DSD QA team sends on-site programme to NPO	2-3 weeks before on-site
DSD QA team conducts QA on- site which include the following activities: • Engagement with the management board • Engagement with staff • Engagement with beneficiaries, family members, caregivers • Document/file auditing and verification	4 weeks after notification
DSD QA team provides initial feedback on findings and disengages	Final day of QA
DSD QA sends final signed report to NPO	3 weeks after on-site
NPO develops draft Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP) with assistance from DSD, if required.	Upon receipt of report
NPO submits SDIP to DSD	2 weeks after receipt of report/5 weeks after on-site
DSD provides input / agreement with SDIP in writing to NPO	
DSD Programme /Directorate Policy Developer manages monitoring of NGO progress with implementation of SDIP, and mentoring where required	Upon receipt of SDIP

The steps outlined above will be supported by a more detailed implementation guideline which will form part of the toolkit.
See Annexure **C**

The process of conducting on-site quality assurance can take between 3-5 days, depending on the size of the NGO or facility. For this reason it is important to give timeous notification thereof and adhere to confirmed dates.

Whilst this Framework takes a developmental approach, if the findings of the monitoring exercise are such that it warrants immediate termination of services and/ or closure of a service, organization or facility, no corrective or service delivery improvement plan will be required and the processes for termination or closure will instead be followed. In such instances the principles of administrative justice must prevail.

9.4 MANAGEMENT OF THE MONITORING FINDINGS/POST- MONITORING SUPPORT

A critical step in the QA process is the management of the monitoring findings. Policy Developers in the Programmes will be responsible for this function in their capacity as managers of the transfer payment agreement or case managers. It starts with the DSD QA team's written confirmation of agreement with the NPO's SDIP. The latter might be preceded by some consultation between the DSD and the NPO. The SDIP is the vehicle for ensuring continuous improvement and binding the NPO as well as DSD to complying with commitments in respect of post- monitoring actions and interventions.

The Department monitors progress with the SDIP whilst providing on-going support and capacity building where required. Where longer term intensive capacity building/training is required to improve NPO performance and NPOs are not in a position to access such opportunities themselves, the Department could play a facilitation role through the programme or the Institutional Capacity Building component

From the above it is clear that the monitoring findings could have implications for the contents of the Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) and therefore a more integrated approach must also be adopted to the process of TPA development, monitoring (desk-top and on-site), and management of progress with SDIP. Intelligent monitoring requires

sound knowledge of a NGOs performance status and individualised TPAs which contain conditions for funding based on monitoring findings

10   THE QUALITY ASSURANCE TEAM

Comprehensive performance monitoring must be conducted by skilled, multi-disciplinary teams representative of the key functions of the NGO to be monitored, and the purpose and focus of the monitoring. This could require collaboration with other provincial departments for example in the case of homes for older persons. The team could also include an external expert as this tends to promote the perception of greater objectivity and balance. Where this is done, the programme or service concerned must budget for the costs of the external service provider. The appointed team leader is responsible for leading and managing the Q.A. team and process including finalising the report within the stated time- frames.

11   TRAINING

Teams must be trained to conduct quality assurance and administer the tools. In this regard a comprehensive training manual has been developed and will form part of the QA toolkit.

Once-off training at the inception of the implementation of the QA framework is not sufficient. On-going training of teams is a pre-requisite for effective Quality Assurance practices in DSD.

12.   MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QA FRAMEWORK

Some of the critical success factors for successful implementation of the QA framework include

- Strong leadership to inculcate a commitment to quality and the creation of an organisational culture of continuous service delivery improvement.
  Commitment to QA begins with top managers who are committed to quality expectations and their on-going work to make quality a priority is one the major shifts in moving from a compliance monitoring focus to one of quality improvement.
- Effective change management and communication
- Strengthening staff skills and competencies
- All programmes must have norms and standards

- Commitment of service delivery directorates and own services at regional and facility level to uniform application of the framework

Adherence to this framework must be monitored regularly and in a co-ordinated manner by a dedicated manager. Mechanisms for doing so must be put in place.

13.   REVIEW OF FRAMEWORK

The framework will be reviewed at least annually for the first two years in terms of its applicability and effectiveness and thereafter as and when the need arises. This process of review would include a review of the appropriateness and completeness of standards, indicators, outcomes and measuring tools pertaining to monitoring and pre-monitoring processes, as well as the associated training.

14. COMMUNICATION

Communication regarding the QA framework and its implementation will be managed primarily by the manager responsible for monitoring its implementation and managing its review. This will be done in consultation with the relevant senior and executive departmental managers.