

## 6. Quality Assurance Plan

### Introduction

Quality assurance is a vital part of developing an LTCCP and needs to be incorporated formally into your process (and thus is part of plan(ning) your plan). Quality assurance is an ongoing process, and not just a task that gets done towards the end.

### Why is quality assurance so important?

Quality assurance helps ensure that your plan is:

- complete – legislative requirements are met, and the key issues are discussed
- coherent – all parts of the plan make sense individually and hang together
- consistent – all information is presented in the same way, and
- cost-effective – the need for rework is minimised.

### How does quality assurance relate to the legislation?

A quality assurance process is a tool for ensuring that legislative requirements are met, not a legislative requirement of itself.

### Who should prepare the quality assurance plan and carry out the work?

It is in everyone's interest to ensure the LTCCP is a quality document and is the result of a quality process. An identified person should be responsible for ensuring that quality assurance occurs. Some of the best quality assurance is achieved from the informal quality assurance individual staff incorporate into their daily work. If you have an internal audit function then the conduct of formal quality assurance may be an appropriate role for them. Whoever it is – quality assurance needs to be applied throughout the whole process.

There is generally value in having a person (or several people) at a senior level who is not involved in the day to day 'nuts and bolts' preparation of the LTCCP do the final 'does this all make sense' test.

Some have suggested external peer review may be useful. A peer reviewer would need a reasonable level of knowledge of the local authority that may not exist outside of the local authority itself (even if the reviewer is from a neighbouring authority). Peer review is a part of a quality assurance plan rather than a substitute for it.

### When should the quality assurance plan be prepared?

It is important that quality assurance is factored into the overall LTCCP project plan – thus the quality assurance plan needs to be prepared before the LTCCP project starts (especially for things such as blocking out time in diaries of the senior management).

### What other processes are linked with quality assurance?

Quality assurance is linked to all of the processes that underpin the development of a good LTCCP.

## What were the weaknesses apparent with quality assurance in 2006?

Slippage in overall project plans meant the time available for quality assurance was limited or was applied too late to make much difference to the final document.

Drafts of the statement of proposal indicated that in some local authorities there was a lack of overall checks for consistency and coherence checks.

The audit process became a de facto quality assurance process adding to time and cost.

## Good practice tips/what good practice information is available?

*What should a good quality assurance plan include?*

QA AREA	DESCRIPTION
Role and Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is responsible for what part of QA</li> <li>A decision on the use of internal vs external resources</li> </ul>
Consistency checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The general 'does the whole document make sense' test</li> <li>Checking financials and groups of activity statements against the funding and financial policies</li> <li>Checking the Mayor and/or CE foreword and/or strategic issues discussion aligns with the rest of the document</li> <li>Checking that forecasting assumptions have been consistently applied and reasons for any departures have been documented</li> <li>Consistency of language</li> </ul>
LTCCP Preparation and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Checks of data compilation controls</li> <li>Identifying project risks and pressure points</li> <li>Checking links between underlying data (e.g. AMPs) and the LTCCP</li> </ul>
LTCCP Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative compliance checklists</li> <li>Checks of content against agreed formats</li> <li>Checks that the LTCCP is readable and as user friendly as possible (e.g. have the key issues for consultation been clearly identified)</li> </ul>
External Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaising with auditors on how internal QA work may help with the completion of the external audit of the LTCCP</li> </ul>
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List the key points of the LTCCP process at which QA needs to be done</li> </ul>