

SERVICE EXCELLENCE



STORYBOOK

SERVICE EXCELLENCE STORYBOOK

Introduction

The Service Excellence Project was a collaborative initiative between the Department for Families and Communities (DFC) and Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (CANH), in which a project officer was funded by DFC and the Department of Health, and employed at CANH, from August 2004 to January 2008, to support agencies in the Neighbourhood Development, Families with Children and Low Income Support non government sectors, to initiate and further develop their continuous improvement processes. This style of support was also implemented in other non government sectors, including Disability, Mental Health, and Homelessness.

The Service Excellence Quality System of Standards (SE) was utilised in the project as a tool for system development and continuous improvement. This system is comprehensive and includes all aspects of management and governance processes through planning, legislation, human resources, assessment of needs and monitoring of service standards.

The system is externally assessed and internationally accredited, and a number of agencies have been successful in attaining their first level certificate, with others continuing to work through the process.

Project officer support in these sectors will end in February 2008, however continued support in developing and extending this culture of continuous improvement will be provided through CANH and the Service Excellence Team based in Community Connect (DFC). A full project report has been prepared by the project officer outlining the initiatives and outcomes of the project, and is available from CANH.



This has been an inspirational project in which I have seen agencies rise to the challenge and demonstrate the reasons why they have survived the ongoing tough times in the community services sectors. This storybook is an account of their experiences and an opportunity to get a taste of their perspective, rather



than mine. Therefore I will not go further here, but will go on to a special message from the Manager of the Service Excellence Program, before acknowledging those involved in the production of this storybook. I will then hand over to the agencies who chose to share their experiences in the hope of leaving something behind that may benefit those considering the use of such a system in the future.

A message from the Manager, Service Excellence Program

Janet Haydon, Manager of the Service Excellence Program in the Department for Families and Communities has commended the particularly strong uptake in the community and neighbourhood houses area for their hard work and commitment to customer service. Janet has said “It is good to see these great organisations embracing quality in such an enthusiastic way, and see each and every one of them become more robust, grow in confidence and strive to become excellent organisations as they embed quality into the fabric of their organisation. I sincerely commend each and every one of the organisations who have embraced the Service Excellence Program. I also particularly wish to thank Jenny Slack and Rosemary Neal for their outstanding support and value added approach to the Service Excellence Program.”

Acknowledgements

First and foremost thank you to those who participated in the SE project with me. There are many more of you than those who were able to write a story for this storybook and I appreciate all of you for your generosity, commitment and persistence in working through your systems, facing the hard stuff, and sharing the good stuff.

I would especially like to thank those who were able to contribute to this storybook. I hope it is a valuable resource for the future.

Thank you also to Rosemary Neal, Janet Haydon, Gill McFadyen, and the team at CANH for giving their support and expertise to both the project and this storybook.

Special thanks to Janet Chambers, Honorary CANH Member, for her help and advice, and for setting such a great example in the Mental Health Storybook.

Last but not least, thank you to Alison Harker of CANH for assisting with the layout and pictures, and making this storybook beautiful.

Jenny Slack
Service Excellence Project Officer
Community & Neighbourhood Houses
and Centres Association



January 2008

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Aberfoyle Community Centre

The storyteller

Ellen Jezierski, Community Development Officer.

The centre

Our Vision is for a welcoming place to engage and grow.

Our Mission is to respond to individual and community needs by facilitating a diverse and accessible range of social, leisure, recreational and educational activities that develop personal growth, encourage well-being and a sense of identity.



We endeavour to:

- Plan and implement quality and affordable programs in response to community needs.
- Provide a welcoming environment that fosters participation and community spirit.
- Encourage, acknowledge, support and train the volunteers within the centre.
- Develop working partnerships, network with other agencies and professional bodies, to continue to create positive pathways for local residents.

The challenges

We approached the system with support from Jenny at CANH, which helped us identify where we have gaps in policy, procedures, documentation, our constitution, and much more. We have worked on and now display our Code of Conduct, and our next step has been to readopt all of our policies, a process which we have almost completed.

We have also been working on our Vision, Mission and Aims. We will have a Strategic Planning Day on the 20th of October 2007, named “Moving On”, where we will examine our role as a centre and set “do-able” goals for our new year in our brand new centre.

The most difficult part of meeting Service Excellence for us is that we don't have time to work on all of the material we need to produce as evidence of our administrative procedures, but we will get there, it is just very slow.

The benefits

We will have operations manuals and procedures to stream line every day tasks and protect ourselves from liability, additionally we will have a happier team as communication will have improved, and is improving, as we "tidy" up our procedures through this process. Time management will improve as we proceed further, but we need time to set it all up in order to save time later!

Advice to others

Get a grant for someone to do it!

What has quality meant to your agency

Quality to us means happy people, staff, volunteers and participants.

Great customer relations and follow up. Return customers, due to a welcoming and professional environment. Everything completed adequately, in work time and not hundreds of hours after hours.

Quality also means meeting community need, through genuine community consultation and engagement.

Aberfoyle Community Centre Inc Code of Conduct

To create a safe environment that promotes responsibility, friendliness and tolerance.

Volunteers and staff have a responsibility to identify and report any risks or behaviour that contravenes the House Rules.

Violence will not be tolerated including intimidation, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment, threat of violence or assault.

Discrimination will not be tolerated including conversation or body language that refers to an individual's religion, gender, sexuality, age, race, disability, marital status or pregnancy.

Employees, volunteers, and patrons are not permitted at the centre whilst affected by any drugs or alcohol.

Volunteers and staff will treat all information gained in a strictly professional manner and not discuss matters inappropriately with any other person.

The board of ACC has a commitment to create a community centre environment that is free from violence, harassment and discrimination and to ensure that the house code of conduct is supported and promoted.

The City of Onkaparinga supports the management committee in creating a centre that is safe and enjoyable for all participants.

Contact details:

Aberfoyle Community Centre

1 Jessica Street, Aberfoyle Park SA 5159

Phone: (08) 8270 5377

Aldinga Community Centre



The storyteller

Jane Taylor, Community Development Officer.

The centre

Aldinga Community Centre is located 45km south of Adelaide in a peri-urban area with few locally available services. The surrounding area experiences a low SEIFA index and a high incidence of low incomes, high unemployment and single parent

families. The Centre is relatively large and provides a wide range of classes and services for parents and children, adult community education, recreation and health.

The challenges

The main challenge was finding the time to actually allocate to the project. Regularly scheduling sub-committee meetings meant that time was actually made. The Management Committee struggled with all the new policies that were being proposed and particularly found the Delegation of Authority policy very confronting. The best way was to start with what we already had in place and then to slowly progress through the document and implement each part one by one rather than tackle it as a whole, which was very daunting. Risk management was the most daunting part of the project and it was frustrating when the document we had been working on was changed to another format.

The benefits

It is still too early to comment on this, at the moment it is just sheer hard work.

Advice to others

Don't enter into it lightly, it is a huge process and make sure you allocate sufficient time for it (eg lose another project). Don't try to tack it on to an already over loaded work load. Make sure the Management Committee realise that it is a HUGE project that they will need to give their support!



The future

We are probably about 60% of the way through and obviously intend to finish the process now we have started. However it is not a priority as we have a number of other major projects that are taking up the time.

What has quality meant to your agency?

It has been a frustrating process and not yet had any discernible benefits for the Centre.

Centre contact details:

Aldinga Community Centre

Symonds Reserve Hall, Stewart Avenue, Aldinga Beach SA 5173

Phone: (08) 8556 5940 Fax: 8556 5192



Coromandel Community Centre

The storyteller

Lyn Walkley, Community Development Officer.

The centre



Coromandel Community Centre is located in the foothills bordering on the Mitcham and Onkaparinga Council area. It is funded by the City of Onkaparinga, for core funding. It is staffed by a CDO for 27 hours per week. Other funding is from grants, or from casual hire of the centre.

Most courses are user pays, or subsidised. It is located next to an oval and creek setting and has only 2 main rooms.

The centre provides services from birth to grave, however, due to the level of employment and home ownership in the area, many of the programs are seen as building communities and early intervention. There is minimal disposable income, and the centre provides opportunities for individuals and families to participate in low cost professional activities, support groups and to provide open and equal access, individual growth and respect.

The challenges

Time factor is the main thing, with limited staffing and volunteers who are all busy. The workbooks are good, and provide concise information to assist in putting down what evidence we have. It also allows us to reflect on what we have already in place.

The benefits

- Reflection and consolidation of information.
- Documentation for succession planning.

Advice to others

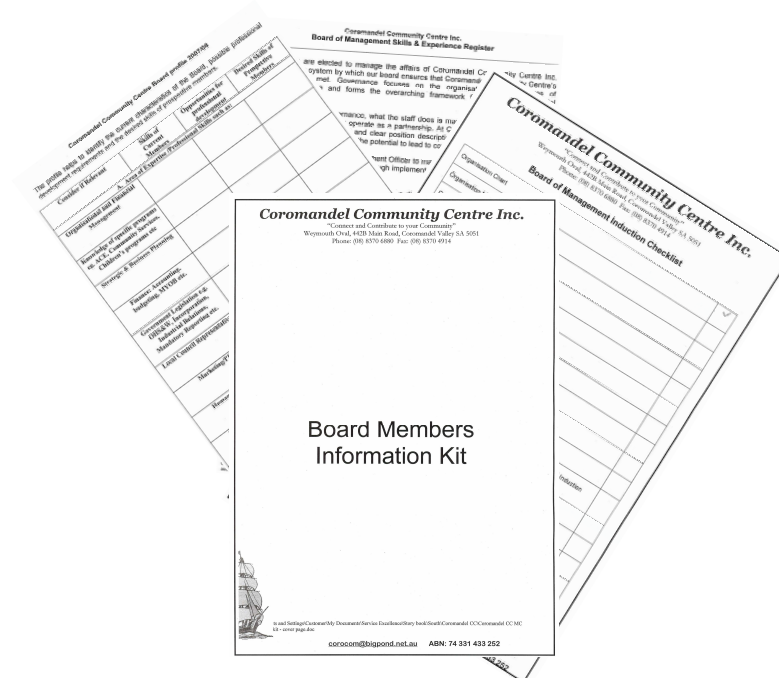
- Take time to reflect on your achievements.
- Look carefully at what you already have in place.
- Start by documenting everything you do.
- Look to your community for suggestions and be open to criticism.

The future

We have just finished working through the workbooks with a small committee. The next step is to complete some extra documentation and put some of the strategies in place. We plan to ready for assessment within 2 months.

What has quality meant to your agency?

The satisfaction of knowing that what we are doing is of high quality and meeting the standards of SEF.



Contact details:

Coromandel Community Centre

Weymouth Oval, 442b Main Road, Coromandel Valley SA 5051

Phone: (08) 8370 6880

Email corocom@bigpond.net.au

Goodwood Community Services

The storyteller

Pam Dale, Coordinator, Goodwood Community Services.

The centre



Our centre is located at the rear of the Goodwood shopping precinct and is linked to the Goodwood Library. We are a fairly large purpose build centre that is owned by the City of Unley. The programs offered at the centre are managed by a Community Based Management Committee.

We offer a variety of programs for families with young children, two ethno-specific HACC programs, English language classes and a Child Development Worker. The Centre also offers a variety of fitness programs for all ages; including Indoor Cycling, Yoga, Keep Fit For Over 50's and Boot Camp. We also have a Volleyball competition three nights per week and a variety of community groups offering a variety of programs for the community.

Currently we have over 20,000 people using the centre each year and we are supported by about 120 volunteers who contribute about 10,000 hours per year. We have 11 staff, 3 are employed by the City of Unley and 8 are employed by the Incorporated Body.

The challenges

Due to all staff and Management Committee being time poor, I recruited a third year social work student to take the lead role in undertaking the SEF. This was the best thing we could have done, to ensure we completed the audit. Having someone dedicated to the project meant that targets were met, all staff, management, volunteers and community were kept informed and on task. Having someone to do the leg work was fantastic. It meant that I and the Board could be more reflective on the tasks.

However, by having a student, some Board and staff members were probably not as involved as they could have been. If we did it again, I would again look at having a student but would look at establishing a working group (of staff and Board members) to support the student – rather than it mainly being the Coordinator.

The low point is not knowing how this will continue. Overall I thought the process was great, but I am unclear on how the SEF will occur in the future and at what cost? There is also the time commitment in undertaking the project. Some of the language and terminology in the workbook was confusing but this has apparently been improved with the new books.

The benefits

A sense of achievement and pride for having achieved it. A greater understanding about what we do and why and how, by the Board, Staff, Volunteers and Customers. The student gained a great deal of knowledge from the process and went on to do Honours in Social Work and gained a position in the field.

We now have a comprehensive policy and procedure system and a vastly improved filing and resource system. We are now able to cope much better with changes to policies and/or procedures and changing legislation. It was a great learning process. Improved systems have helped improve the quality of the centre's processes and that has filtered through to better quality systems for the consumers. It is hoped that by achieving SEF we will be able to demonstrate to funding bodies and potential sources of funding that we are working within quality systems and processes and delivering quality services to the community.

Advice to others

Get everyone who needs to be involved in the process on board prior to starting. Think about forming a steering committee to ensure the workload doesn't fall on one person. Talk to people who have been through the process and seek support. Don't set time limits, work at a pace that is workable for the centre.

The future

We completed SE in July 2005. We continue to use SE in our day to day operations and will need to revisit the workbooks in 2008.

What has quality meant to your agency?

It means we can feel confident that in everything we do, that we are offering the best service possible to our community and this is backed up by quality processes, practices and policies.

Contact details:

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Mid Murray Community Support Service and CHIPS



The storyteller

Marion Wilson, Coordinator, Mid Murray Community Support Service & CHIPS.

The centre

Mid Murray Community Support Service (MMCSS) is a small, non-profit organisation that offers a very diverse range of programs and services including Adult Community Education, information, access and referral,

office services and internet access to the community.

MMCSS is located in the small rural community of Mannum and services the Lower Mid Murray council area. MMCSS works closely with CHIPS (Community Help for the Isolated with Personal Support).

The challenges

Minimal funding from DFC means we are constantly running on restricted resources, however, with such an enormous task as SE, we found our resources stretched to breaking point.

Our committee formed a sub-committee that met weekly to discuss and implement SE strategies and follow-up at the next meeting. Documents were then forwarded to committee for approval. This worked very well for us. The assistance we received from CANH throughout this process was invaluable.



The benefits

Working through this program has taken many hours of work by several staff, fortunately there was no cost involved for the support received from CANH and the external evaluation process.

Our organisation is now fully compliant with all policies and procedures and operating with confidence, and the knowledge we are compliant in all areas.

Staff development during this process has been a major bonus, the staff involved gaining a sense of achievement and acquiring vast skills during the process.

Advice to others

Don't be overwhelmed by the workbook. Take it page by page, step by step, and use the tools to identify the gaps in your systems, policies and procedures.

Celebrate all the achievements and look on difficult situations as a challenge that will eventually be overcome and improve your organisation and/or the welfare of your volunteers.

Keep your eyes firmly on what the outcomes will be, but, always take the time to look back to see how far you have come.

The future

We were very proud to achieve Level One last October and now plan to take the next step to second level, although at this stage this is happening very slowly.



We are, however, very concerned about the costs that may be involved regarding future accreditations and feel that if a cost is going to be placed on the accreditation process we would not have the funds to participate.

What has quality meant to your agency?

SE has helped to address our shortcomings, identify the gaps and with the support of Jenny and Gill at CANH, write new policies and a strategic plan, and we have developed a new brochure to showcase our services.



Contact details

*Mid Murray Community Support Service
& CHIPS
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Phone: 8569 2129/ Fax: 8569 2720*

Midway Road Community House

The storyteller

Glennys Lehmann, Community Development Coordinator, Midway Road Community House Inc.

The centre

Our centre was incorporated in 1982 and is a three bedroom Housing Trust house with extensions, in Elizabeth East. The 'House' initially belonged to the Uniting Church and in 1992 it was put on the market for sale. The Elizabeth community responded by taking out a mortgage to buy it. Our centre is independent, community managed and owned.



The programs and services include adult literacy & numeracy, English as a second language, playgroups, personal development programs, counseling, mental health support, one to one computing for people with additional needs, computing classes, craft, volunteering placements, work experience, free crèche for participants, fundraising, social activities, drop-in., Basic Living Skills (for people with a disability), Vacation Care Program, Family SA access and referrals to other services.

The challenges

Our Vacation Care program was moving through QA accreditation at the same time as the 'House' commenced SE so keeping timelines and sanity were the main issues.

We decided to go 'back to basics' reviewing our philosophy, the needs of the present community, reviewing all our policies, new legislation and legal processes in reporting. Prior to this process community houses did not have a benchmark for quality of services and we seemed to be delivering services 'in a wilderness'.

The biggest challenge was to 'sell' the importance of this process to volunteers who viewed it as a 'giant paper trail', the enormous commitment of time, 'things were OK without all this' and 'why do we need all these processes'?

The low points were the enormous energy input needed by the key people of a small organisation like ours to complete the process and at times it would have been easy to 'give up'.

The benefits

The benefits would be that we now have policies and procedures for almost any process or problem that may arise meeting all legal requirements, and we have reached a benchmark of excellence for our services.

We have all legal requirements in reporting risks, OH&S issues and injuries in the workplace.

We are independent which means we do not have a sponsoring body such as a council who could share their expertise in legal areas.

We have upgraded our processes in the areas of employment and recruitment, and meeting workplace procedures, and I am very proud of what we have accomplished as a team.

Advice to others

- The process needs the full commitment of management, staff and volunteers working together as a team.
- Use the CANH SE Resource CD as a guide.
- Use the laptop at management meetings to print out agreed changes to policies so that the processes can be completed immediately and not waste time.
- Work in a systematic manner.

The future

We have reached Essential Minimum Excellence in November 2006 and have been recommended to work towards Award level. We feel we need to find any gaps and regain our enthusiasm to move on. We will continue to use SE as this is the most important 'tool' offered to our centres in the 16 years I have been a Community Development Coordinator.

What has quality meant to your centre?

Quality has meant that all our staff and volunteers are trained adequately, are mindful of legal processes and expectations. They are now delivering quality service in their daily work. Recognition by funding bodies of our achievements is also important to us as a centre.

Contact details:

*Midway Road Community House
48 Midway Road, Elizabeth East SA 5112
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Mount Barker Family House

The storyteller

Rosemary Rodrigues, Manager,
Mount Barker Family House.

The centre

We are a community centre, with an occasional child care centre as part of our operations, based in Mount Barker in the Adelaide Hills. We provide courses and programs to meet our growing community's needs including leisure and social interaction, health and fitness, employment and career skill development. The Centre is also available for hire to community groups.



The challenges

The main challenge was the lack of human resources – e.g. minimal staff and volunteers and the level of expertise and experience in the system. The Management Committee members and senior staff believed that it was essential for the organisation to undertake the process for not only good governance but also for succession planning. We started, with the support of Jenny Slack, on one section at a time, and then moved on to the next to prevent the process from becoming overwhelming and adding to the already over-burdened work load of senior staff.

Accessing additional funding from the Council to employ administrative support enabled the process to progress, however, without this additional support it would probably not have been possible to continue with the original staffing levels. It was a huge learning curve for all involved and, without the commitment of one or two people, would not have been achieved.

The low points were the seemingly endless consultations, documentation, frustration and workload. If we were undertaking this again, there would be a lot more involvement by all staff; however, this is not always possible as the funding to cover their additional work time is not necessarily available. There is also significant cost to the organisation with staff work time, training, additional documentation, etc. and no funding is available to support this.

The benefits

Now that we have achieved the first level and are working on the second level, we do have much better systems in place and certainly documentation around many of the processes to enable better succession planning and, where required, training of staff and volunteers.

It has also been a good learning experience for all staff, volunteers and Management Committee members and provides a framework for sound business management and good governance.

Advice to others

Start on one step at a time and get other people within your organisation to assist and support you as the workload can be very heavy. However, it is also a time to teach and learn from each other and your peers. Seek support from peers and CANH – there are plenty of people who can and are willing to help.

The future

We are currently working on the Award Level, having successfully completed and gained certification for Level 1 in 2006, and are working through one section at a time. Whilst a great deal of the work has been completed, there are gaps and we will continue to use the SEF process after we have achieved Award Level.

What has quality meant to your centre?

The process has meant that we have had to critically examine all aspects of our operation and infrastructure and given many of the people involved a greater understanding and appreciation of what is involved in running our organisation and maintaining its viability.

Contact details:

Mount Barker Family House Inc.
31 Princes Road, Mount Barker SA 5251
Phone/Fax: (08) 8391 2747
Email: familyhouse@internode.on.net



Murray Bridge Community Centre

The storyteller

Bronte Warneke, Community Development Worker.

The centre

The Murray Bridge Community Centre provides opportunities to those who wish to gain confidence in literacy & numeracy, social activities, computers, leadlighting, volunteering, training and self development. The Murray Bridge Community Centre opened its doors in 1979 and has continued to provide relevant and supportive activities for the community, not only for adults but for children and youth, also. The Centre is available for hire at very reasonable rates to outside agencies wishing to utilise the kitchen, hall and computers for their educational purposes - following and maintaining the aims and values of the Centre.



The challenges

The main challenge consisted of finding time to complete assignments. I was the only one who was working on the SEF project and it would have been nice for funding to be available to support this project. In the theme of Community Centres - volunteering is essential to complete the tasks. I was not supported with full time wages, however the job was full time.

The things that worked well included the support from CANH. I found this support to be invaluable to the extent that if it wasn't for the support of CANH, I don't believe I would have achieved as much as I did.

The benefits

Giving the volunteers and the Board of Governance an opportunity to know where they stand within the organisation and to know the future direction of the centre thus providing an opportunity to expand their outlook in themselves and gain their support for the centre's operations.

Advice to others

My advice would be to keep an open mind, a desire to learn more, talk to your committee members and have some of them form a sub-committee to work with you on this project. For one person to take this on is a mighty effort and should not be experienced alone - share the opportunity to grow, together as a community.

The future

We completed SEF stage 1 and I was awarded the 'star' award for my efforts and also gained a beautiful certificate for the centre to display proudly in our reception area for all to see. If I had continued my work there, I would have encouraged the centre to work towards the next level.

What has quality meant to your agency?

Quality: To provide an honestly good service to the community members, knowing we are providing good communication methods through our Board of Governance. Being responsible and providing a 'role-model' persona to other community-based organisations.

Contact details:

*Murray Bridge Community Centre
18 Beatty Terrace (PO Box 429),
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Email: mbcci@lm.net.au
Office Hours: Mon - Thurs, 9am - 4pm*



Reedbeds Community Centre

The storyteller

Lee Prestwood, Coordinator.

The centre

Reedbeds Community Centre is located in Fitch Rd., Fulham.



owns and maintains the building and provides a grant to the independent volunteer Management Committee.

Built in 1971 as part of the Fulham Primary School, the building was the first open plan classroom in South Australia. Following the closure of the school in 1988, concerned members of the local community successfully negotiated with the South Australian Government and the West Torrens Council to retain the building for future development as a community centre. The City of West Torrens now

Re-opened in 1992, the Centre was named to commemorate the character of the local environment during settlement when reed beds stretched all along the coast up to Port Adelaide. Reedbeds now offers art, craft, fitness and computer classes. Many groups including Disability SA, SCOSA and Choices utilise the facility for their clients. It houses many meetings for groups such as Neighborhood Watch, Fiji Seniors, Sonshine Church, Club India and Probus, whilst being a venue to hire for local private groups and individuals.

The challenges

The basis for the Centre to tackle SE was a way of doing a stock take. What areas needed working on, what areas were well covered and what had not even been considered. With a new staff member on board who did not have the history to draw on, it provided her with an induction around the office to locate and implement systems and policies.

The main challenge that still remains is the need to ratify all the new or amended policies that were produced. With the board only meeting once a month, and having to deal with all the other issues that arise in a centre, one or two policies can only be discussed per session, and often they require two or three sessions to be accepted. This makes for a slow process.

Our process is still continuing and remains very useful. The difficulty also arises when once a year new Management Committee members are appointed to the Board. Each individual has their own way of approaching matters and there is also the need to get new members up to speed with the past process. This occasionally provides some hiccups.

The benefits

It is a wonderful benchmark for us to work towards. In our case it has also provided us with an excellent reference in Jenny Slack to guide and encourage the process.

With the book process we could always refer to sections of the SE which in itself was an excellent reference point.



Advice to others

They are probably already doing it, and to label it under the banner of SE helps in many ways. It gives it and your centre credibility and a direction.

It is a process that everyone has heard of in some form and is happy to give input to. It is a very useful exercise to integrate with strategic planning and grant writing and it is important to remember you can do it at your own pace.

What has quality meant to your agency?

It has provided a system for direction and has ensured that the Centre has the correct policies and procedures in place. It ensures that the Management Committee is involved in Service Excellence and that it reflects the Community needs and views.



Contact details:

Reedbeds Community Centre

Fitch Rd, Fulham SA 5024

Phone/Fax: (08) 8235 1644

Email: reedbeds@acecommunications.com.au

Reynella Neighbourhood Centre

The storyteller

Maralyn Blake, Community Development Officer.

The centre

We are a not for profit community centre managed by volunteers. We aim to meet community need by liaising with the local community. We establish and support groups and activities focusing on social interaction, community development, recreation, sport, health, fitness and fun. We provide accessible and diverse life-long learning opportunities to all ages through quality programs.



The challenges

At first the task was very daunting. It has been difficult to get things done as quickly as we'd hoped, however we soon realised we already had a lot in place.

The benefits

It has identified some areas that needed more work and given us examples of things we could use.

Advice to others

We have benefited from doing the work. It helps get things in place in an organised fashion.

The future

We are almost ready to book a time for our Certificate Level assessment.

What has quality meant to your agency?

It has affirmed to us that we are doing a good job and helped us to make small changes to do things even better.

Contact details

Reynella Neighbourhood Centre Inc.

164 Old South Road, Reynella SA 5161

Phone: (08) 8322 3591

Email: reynella@tpg.com.au

The Cornerstone

The storyteller

Mrs. Maureen Chalmers, Director of Morphett Vale Baptist Church Community Services Inc., otherwise known as The Cornerstone.

The centre

We have been involved in community work assisting people in the South for the past 27 years.

The aims are;

- to show the love of God to people by providing care and support for families, children and youth in need;
- to help people who are socially, emotionally and financially disadvantaged;
- to give hope to those who feel there is no hope.



The services offered: Coffee n Chat, a drop in café serving meals for \$2, Emergency Relief, Life Growth Courses on Parenting, Health, Marriage, Pre marriage, Alpha, Drug proof your kids, Self Help Groups for all ages, Sociable Seniors, Chat n Choose craft group, Kids Club and Playgroup, Healing Room & Lydia's Op Shop.

The challenges

The main challenge was finding time in my already busy schedule to put into effect all the new policies to meet quality systems and standards, procedures and documents describing the work already being performed.

Jenny was very helpful in working with me explaining what was required and looking over the work I had completed. I placed copies of all evidence & relevant documentation in two folders. This made it easy when the assessors came to do the assessment. I kept the three days of assessment relatively free so I could be available to the assessors.

The benefits

All our policies and procedures are in place and current, and meet the quality systems and standards. Review reminders are diarised. Changes have been implemented with The Committee to comply with the requirements.

Advice to others

It is a lot of work. Yet it is well worth it. Work with Jenny and do one policy at a time. Chip at the mountain a shovel at a time. Once you have been assessed you need to be patient as you may have a long wait from the assessors.

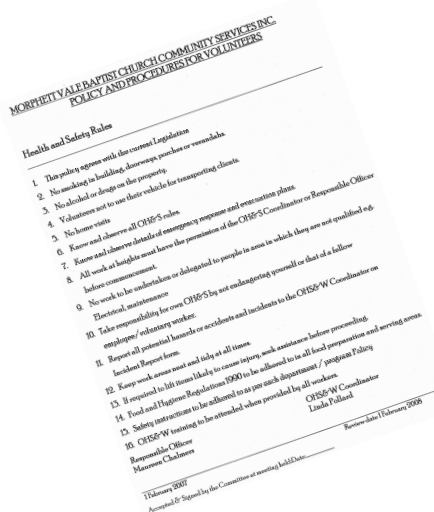
The future

We are awaiting notification of attainment of Certificate Level. We were assessed some time ago and have not yet been notified in writing of a firm outcome, although we have been told verbally that we have met the criteria, and we have responded with any requested materials promptly. It is frustrating at this time, awaiting the outcome.



What has quality meant to your agency?

It has confirmed to us we are not just in a happy, fun place to work. We are working within current quality systems and standards. This means we have a quality service to offer. Volunteers feel cared for, safer and appreciated, knowing policies are in place.



Contact details:

The Cornerstone

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The Hut Community Centre

The storyteller

Heather Trenorden, Community Development Officer.



The centre

The Hut Community Centre has been serving the Adelaide Hills community since it was formed in 1979. In collaboration with the Adelaide Hills Council, community groups and individuals, The Hut provides a range of activities and services for local residents, including community information, computer training, family support, carer respite, a help at home program, music, walking groups, workshops, volunteer training, IT tutoring and short courses.

The challenges

We could not have achieved all that we have without the support of our wonderful volunteers. One challenge was that of volunteer changeover, where one volunteer naturally would move on, and another would take up their role. There was often a time lag and readjustment period. Often the volunteers involved did not have a great deal of time to put into the work each week and would do as much as they could.

Nothing was ever as simple as it first appeared, but we found it more manageable to try and work with one policy at a time, and then work on all the associated implications of that first, before tackling the next one. It would be ideal to pay a dedicated person but this was not possible! Much of the CDO's input was weekend work, because there was never enough uninterrupted time at the centre to work on it.

The benefits

It has provided a formal structure for quality improvement, including documented policies and procedures. We have had a comprehensive OHS&W audit, developed a range of procedures handbooks, and we updated a number of documents that needed review. It feels good to be able to refer people to the procedures when they have a question. For example, we have a high turnover of reception volunteers and they now have a simple document they can go to for almost everything they need to do.



Advice to others

The whole process needs the support of the board, which we had here, and it made everything so much easier. Also, you must accept that this is a long term process, especially when it relies on volunteer time for success, and in many agencies this process could not happen without volunteer input.

The future

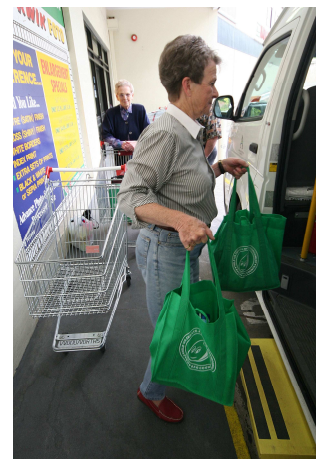
We are currently working on our post assessment action plan for Certificate Level, just completing our review of systems, and confident that we will receive our award at the next ceremony. We plan to continue working with SE, thoroughly integrating it through the whole organisation, as part of our ongoing continuous improvement culture.

What does quality mean to your agency?

We now have a formalised quality improvement system, rather than it being ad hoc. We are aware that some believe this will become essential for funding, and whether or not this happens, we will be using our Certificate Level achievement in future funding applications.

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