



THE 'JEWEL IN THE CROWN' FOR COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT



Quality · Safety · Innovation



The Quality Standards Framework helps TEC organisations achieve certification through a rigorous and ongoing assessment process. It enables providers to understand how they are performing and what they can do to achieve excellence through quality, safety, innovation. QSF is run by TEC Quality, which is accredited to the UK Accreditation Service and is part of TEC Services Association (TSA) – the UK's representative body for technology enabled care.

At the height of the pandemic, the Community Equipment Service (CES) at Croydon Council faced rising demand for support while also getting to grips with running a hub for PPE distribution.

Staff were at the frontline of COVID-19 Response, delivering and installing a range of vital equipment to enable thousands of people to live independently and, crucially, stay out of hospital. Working practices had to be revamped to keep people safe and new skills learnt from scratch. To say it was a testing time would be something of an understatement.

The idea of voluntarily submitting yourself to an in-depth audit during such a challenging period may seem counterintuitive. But if you're a service that prides itself on striving for continuous improvement, it's exactly what you do.

Last year, the CES underwent rigorous assessment to become Quality Standards Framework (QSF) certified.

'While Covid has been a really difficult time, it has also been a time of learning – managing so many different variables, including disruption to the supply chain,' explains head of service Paul Kouassi.

The CES already had a number of awards and accreditations but regarded QSF certification as 'the jewel in the crown'.

'The audit is very in-depth and it's based much more around the service users' experience rather than how we work,' says clinical lead Christina Kofi-Sikah.

'It really demonstrated to all of us how we work and collaborate as a service – that brings an appreciation of what each area does and how it has an impact on other areas of the service. It meant we could collectively look at the ways we work and see how we could improve.'





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THE VALUE

The CES supports around 15,000 people in the borough of Croydon alone – providing everything from wheelchairs to bathing equipment – and thousands more across the 11 partner local authorities it works with.

Being QSF certified helps to reassure commissioners they are not only getting value for money but are also commissioning a service that 'goes above and beyond', says Christina.

For Paul, it's helping to highlight the role community equipment services can play within wider technology enabled care (TEC) provision.

'Through QSF we've found the TSA to be a progressive and supportive organisation. They're really pushing the boundaries and thinking what can we do better?'

He adds: 'We have introduced partners to QSF and encouraged them to do it for their own practices. So it's not only about having a quality service but also about collaboration and promoting quality across our partners. We are stronger together and as each of us goes through QSF, the people who benefit most are the residents who use our services.'



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'We need to find ways to ensure community equipment is integrated with TEC as a whole. In the end it's not about the equipment, it's about understanding the person's need and responding to that.'