Quality Policy

Descriptor	Changes made	Date	Version
Policy first implemented	New Policy	Feb 23	0.1
Review no.1	Updated links to EFQM 2025 Model	Mar 25	0.2
Review no.2			
Review no.3			

Name of policy being superseded (if applicable)	N/A
Related policies	N/A
Related SOPs	Self-Evaluation Process External Inspection Process CIAP Process Provider Assurance Arrangements
Related Guidance	Delivering Excellence Strategy Delivering Excellence Framework Self-Evaluation Guidance Continuous Improvement Action Plan Guidance Quality in Projects Guidance Quality Management Plan guidance and templates Work based learning provider guidance and quality arrangements
Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes
Island Community Impact Assessment completed	No – This policy is not likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities
Intended Audience	Internal Staff
For Publication	Internally and externally
Team responsible for policy	Quality Assurance & Improvement
Policy owner contact details (email)	Julie.Riley@sds.co.uk
Policy due for review (date)	March 2027

Policies should have a clear purpose and perform at least one of the following functions. Please identify all the functions this policy performs.	If statement applies, please mark with an X below
Outline how we allocate limited resources to deliver services or outcomes	
Outline how SDS adheres to legislation, statutory duty etc.	X – Best Value
Ensure fair and consistent allocation of benefits	
Protect organisational assets, including data	
Define expectations around the employee/employer relationship	
Other (please specify)	

Contents

1. Policy summary

SDS aims to deliver quality products and services that are fit for purpose and deliver value for customers, partners and stakeholders. We do this through effective systems of governance and assurance, objective evaluation and continuous improvement. This policy outlines SDS employee responsibilities, through their day-to-day work, to help achieve this goal.

2. Policy purpose and objectives

SDS is committed to providing quality products and services that deliver value to customers, partners and stakeholders. This policy defines what quality means within SDS and the underlying principles (see Section 3) that guide us to achieve this. It aims to:

- Ensure our products and services are built on customer needs and deliver value
- Ensure our colleagues are enabled to deliver quality products and services through our culture of everyday leadership
- Provide assurance to customers, partners and stakeholders that we deliver high quality products and services
- Ensure employees understand our quality principles and arrangements
- Ensure colleagues understand their role in ensuring suppliers, contractors and providers understand expectations of them in delivering products and services.

3. Strategic context

SDS ensures quality products and services by:

- Embedding effective governance arrangements throughout the organisation
- Ensuring quality assurance and improvement arrangements are effective and consistently applied
- Maintaining a robust evidence base which supports effective performance management and decision making
- Building the capability of the organisation to continuously drive improvement
- External scrutiny from other Scottish Government agencies.

This policy contributes to our goal of being an impactful organisation, as outlined in the **SDS Strategic Plan 2022-2027**. We are committed to delivering quality products and services in a cost effective manner. Our policy incorporates the principles of Quality Management, adapted from the **ISO 9001 Principles of Quality Management**, that underpin how we ensure quality across SDS. These principles are:

- **Customer focus** – we strive to understand and deliver what customers value
- **Process approach** – we understand and manage our interrelated processes as a coherent system to achieve consistent and predictable results
- **Evidence-based decision making** – our decisions are based on the analysis and evaluation of data and information we gather internally and externally
- **Improvement** – We have an ongoing focus on improvement and enhancement both for what we deliver and how we deliver to customers
- **Leadership** – leaders at all levels establish unity of purpose and direction that create conditions in which our staff achieve our quality objectives
- **Engagement of people** – our staff are competent, empowered and engaged at all levels and enhance our capability to create and deliver value

- **Relationship management** – we manage and influence relationships with interested parties, such as partners, providers, contractors, suppliers and stakeholders to optimise their impact on performance and quality
- **External Scrutiny** – this ensures we meet the requirements and expected standards of public bodies as well as providing independent assurance that services are well-managed, safe and fit-for-purpose, and that public money is being used properly.

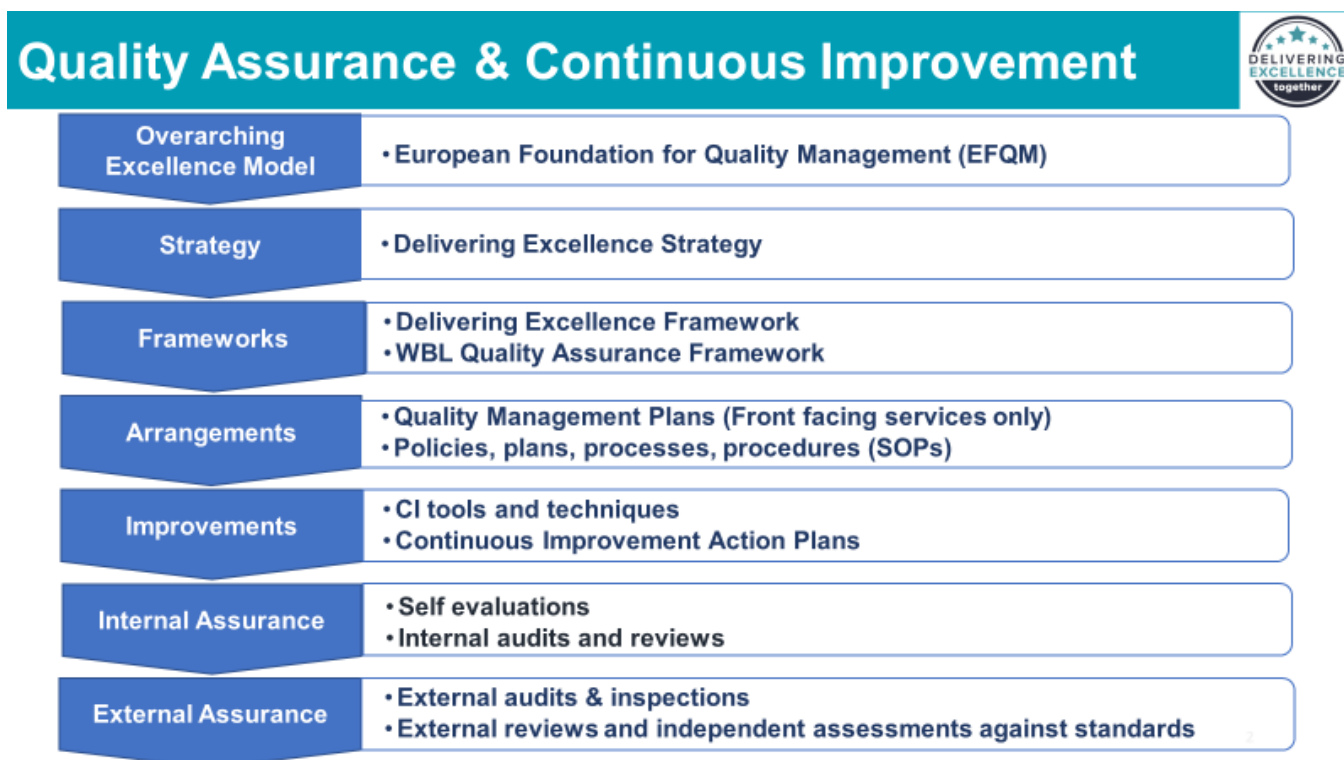## 4. Definitions

Quality:	Our products and services deliver customer value by satisfying their needs and expectations. Quality is perceptual, conditional and subjective and may be understood differently by different people.
Quality Assurance:	Planned action taken to provide confidence that our products and services satisfy the given requirements and meet or exceed customer needs and expectations.
Quality Management Plans:	Set out the quality arrangements and measures for managing the quality of products and services.
Continuous Improvement:	The ongoing improvement of products, services or processes through incremental and breakthrough improvements.

5. Scope

SDS aims to embed quality across all its products, services and enabling services. Therefore, all employees have a responsibility to understand and implement this policy.

6. Policy detail

To support the effective implementation of this policy we have a variety of frameworks, plans and processes in place that enable our teams to adhere to the quality principles across the organisation. The way in which we currently achieve this is set out below:

Quality Assurance & Continuous Improvement (DELIVERING EXCELLENCE together)

Overarching Excellence Model	• European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)
Strategy	• Delivering Excellence Strategy
Frameworks	• Delivering Excellence Framework • WBL Quality Assurance Framework
Arrangements	• Quality Management Plans (Front facing services only) • Policies, plans, processes, procedures (SOPs)
Improvements	• CI tools and techniques • Continuous Improvement Action Plans
Internal Assurance	• Self evaluations • Internal audits and reviews
External Assurance	• External audits & inspections • External reviews and independent assessments against standards

- The Delivering Excellence Framework comprises of seven quality indicators which underpin the SDS self evaluation process and fully align to the EFQM Excellence Framework.
- The **Delivering Excellence Strategy** sets out the vision and objectives for excellence which are firmly aligned with the strategic plan, the values and culture of everyday leadership.
- Work Based Learning Quality Assurance arrangements are currently in place to support staff involved in carrying out quality assurance activities with learning providers who deliver SDS commissioned work-based learning provision.
- Quality Management Plans (QMP) set out the necessary arrangements and standards associated with the planning and consistent delivery of front facing products and services.
- **Continuous Improvement Action Plans** (CIAPs) contain all the improvement actions being progressed by a team within a given year.

7. Further guidance

EFQM Framework 2025
Quality Assurance and Improvement Connect page (Containing: Delivering Excellence Strategy; Delivering Excellence Framework; WBL QA Framework, Continuous Improvement Action Plan Guidance; Quality in Projects Guidance; Quality Management Plan guidance and templates etc.)
Work Based Learning Quality Assurance & Improvement Hub