# Safe service delivery in supported residential services webinar – 3 June 2025

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## Today’s webinar will cover

* What requirements have changed for me since 1 July?
* What are the common challenges to compliance in SRS?
* What is Social Services Standard 1 and how do I demonstrate compliance with my requirements?
* Where can I get more information?

## About the Social Services Regulator

The Victorian Government established the Social Services Regulator (SSR) as an independent statutory authority under the [*Social Services Regulation Act 2021*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021).

* The Act establishes new laws to regulate social services in Victoria.
* The Act, the [Social Services Regulations 2023](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/001) and the [Supported Residential Services Regulations 2024](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-supported-residential-services-regulations-2024/001) began on 1 July 2024.

The new laws mean Victorian social service providers have:

* a common set of social service **standards**
* a single **independent** regulator

The SSR replaces the:

* Human Services Regulator
* Previous SRS legislation

### How is the Social Service Regulator different to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing?

The Regulator and the department share an interest in ensuring that the rights, safety and wellbeing of Victorian social service users are supported, and safeguarding systems are effectively administered. However, they each have separate and distinct roles.

The Regulator also has a separate role to that of TAC and WorkSafe as funders, and from the NDIS as a co-regulator

This means that providers may have different obligations and respond to requests for information from each organisation separately.

For example, a service provider may need to complete regular reporting as part of their funding contract and make notifications of changes to the services they provide as part of their obligations under section 47 of the SSR Act.

Social Services Regulator is responsible for regulation and focuses on:

* Engagement and education about the new laws
* Managing registrations
* Regulating the:
	+ Six new Social Service Standards
	+ Child Safe Standards
* Responding to breaches of:
	+ Legislation
	+ Regulations
	+ Conduct

DFFH is responsible for SRS sector support and focuses on:

* Sector planning and capability
* SRS community of practice
* Managing SAVVI, PLP funding
* Assesses resident support needs, when notified by the Regulator
* Acting as a system steward

### Who is covered by the new laws?

Services covered by the Social Services Regulator:

* Community-based child and family services
* Child protection
* Disability services
* Supported residential services
* Homelessness services
* Family violence services
* Sexual assault support services
* Out-of-home care
* Secure welfare services

We refer to services covered by the new laws as being ‘in scope’. All SRS providers are included in the new laws.

The registration requirement applies to all providers in scope of the scheme, no matter what size they are or how much funding they receive.

[Find out more about what services are in-scope](https://www.vic.gov.au/services-scope-new-scheme).

### Registration requirements are ongoing

SRS providers were automatically registered with the Regulator on 1 July 2024.

Your registration continues unless cancelled by the Regulator.

Once registered, you must meet ongoing compliance requirements of the new laws. These include:

* + meeting the six [Social Services Standards](https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/HumanServicesRegulator-DHHS-GRP/Shared%20Documents/Guidance%20and%20engagement/Reporting/Sec%2047%20%28registration%29%20notifications/Social%20Services%20Standards)
	+ complying with your registration requirements
	+ reporting requirements

SRS specific requirements, including those around medication management, NTVs, RSAs, staffing and fees

While there may be some overlap with other standards, compliance in other regulatory laws does not automatically mean that your service provider meets the Standards.

Requirements include:

* meeting the Social Services Standards
* meeting the Child Safe Standards (if they apply)
* reporting about multiple things
* SRS service specific
	+ Medication management
	+ Notices to vacate
	+ Residential service agreements
	+ Staffing
	+ Fees

[Find out more about registration](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-registration).

## What we see in supported residential services

From 1 July 2024 to 22 May 2025 we have:

* Had 33 community visitor reports
* Received 719 notifiable incidents
	+ 73 critical
	+ 642 notifiable incidents
* 31 notices to vacate (reported to us by Homes Victoria)

Regulatory activity for SRS 1 July 2024 to 30 April 2025

* 151 physical inspections conducted (41 from notifiable incidents)
* 61 improvement notices issues to 18 service providers. 12 of those are closed, 49 are still open
* 133 pieces of remedial guidance and information provided
* 778 other interactions with service providers (emails, phone calls and meetings)

These numbers reflect SRS providers only and do not include the wider funded sector.

### What we are seeing in SRS

While we know most SRS providers are doing their best, we do see non-compliance across many areas.

It's also worth noting that these kinds of non-compliances are considered high-risk.

We have listed a couple here, and some simple hints for you to help address these issues.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Identified non-compliance | Our tips |
| Medication administration error | Ensure your staff:* sign for medication administration immediately
* administer medication with resident
* report refusals to resident’s GP
* need evidence from provider/prescriber they are aware resident can safely self-administer and record own medication
 |
| Deterioration in health responsibilities  | Ensure you:* discuss your concerns with the resident’s health care provider and any other relevant parties
* support resident choice
* record and can demonstrate what you have done to seek support for your resident
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| Residential service agreements | Ensure RSAs contain the information the law requires |
| Reporting incidents | Ensure you:* provide enough details in your incident reports
* check guidance online
 |

## Social Service Standard 1: Safe service delivery

We will explore Social services standard 1 further with you, including:

* + Learning more about the Standard
	+ How SRS providers can demonstrate they meet Standard 1
	+ The Regulator’s role in supporting you and ensuring compliance

As you will be aware, one of the key changes is the replacement of the Accommodation and Personal Support Standards with six Social Services Standards.

This gives SRS providers more flexibility in how they meet the six Social Services Standards.

If you had to meet the Accommodation and Personal Support Standards, you will likely need to make some changes to meet the new Standards.

There are six Social Services Standards

1. Safe service delivery
2. Service user agency and dignity
3. Safe service environment
4. Feedback and complaints
5. Accountable organisational governance
6. Safe workforce

On our website we have information sheets for each standard.

[Find out more about the six Social Services Standards](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards).

### What does Standard 1 protect?

Standard 1 protects service users from avoidable hard, neglect and abuse.

Standard 1 aims to ensure that services delivered are based on assessed needs. supports the safe delivery of social services using current evidence-based practice, including trauma-informed practice.

The Standard requires SRS providers to identify and manage risk, and consider their residents’:

* Physical health
* Mental health
* Cultural background
* Aboriginal cultural safety

### Safe service delivery

Each standard includes intended outcomes and service requirements.

Outcomes are what we expect to see as a result of implementing the requirements of the standard.

Service requirements outline actions for social services providers to demonstrate they are meeting a Standard. These describe practical actions to take to meet each Standard.

To meet the Standard, you must meet all of the Standard’s services requirements

* You must meet the Standards as far as is ‘reasonably practicable’ for the social services you are registered to provide.
* In practice, this means a service provider will need to show that they have taken reasonable steps to meet each Standard.

Outcomes:

* to protect service users from avoidable harm when providing social services
* to take into account service users’ needs, circumstances and goals when providing a social service
* service users receive services that support their health and wellbeing
* service users receive social services that are culturally safe
* Aboriginal service users receive social services that are culturally safe.

Service requirements:

* service user safety
* needs assessments and service planning
* health and wellbeing
* cultural safety and inclusion
* Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusion.

### Key differences from previous Accommodation and Personal Support Standards

Below are some of the key differences to the previous accommodation and personal support standards to help you understand what additional may be required of your SRS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Service requirement | Difference |
| Service user safety | Includes identifying and reducing risks of harm to service users. Its scope is broader than the physical environment. |
| Needs assessments and service planning | Includes all services provided to a service user, whether provided by the SRS or not.  |
| Cultural safety and inclusion | More clearly stated requirements, including staff training. |
| Aboriginal cultural safety | More clearly stated requirements that all providers must understand. |

## How do I demonstrate meeting Standard 1?

Now that we understand what is required, we can look at how you can show us that you are meeting the Standard.

### How to meet the Standards

Understand

* Build awareness of the Standards
* Identify outcomes for each Standard
* Note key differences between your practices under the previous Personal support and accommodation standards and the new Standards

Review

* Review current policies and procedures for safe service delivery
* Check your processes against each Standard’s service requirements
* Discuss and review service requirements with your leadership team

Prepare

* Identify gaps to meeting service requirements
* Use the guidance in the Standards information sheet
* Include key documents showing compliance in your risk frameworks

Act

* Line your policies and procedures up with service requirements
* Build in indicators of success to stay on track for ongoing compliance

[Find out more about how to meet the standards](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards).

### Checking your compliance with Standard 1

Regularly review your policies and procedures to track your performance.

It is up to SRS providers to determine what documents and evidence will assist you to show you meet the Standard.

The Regulator recognises that different providers have different resourcing and capacity.

All providers must meet the Standards, although they may use different ways to achieve that which reflect their different sizes, resident types and location.

Positive indicators may include:

* showing that social services are delivered based on evidence-informed practice
* Support plans are based on health provider advice
* your assessments recognise your residents’ strengths
* your SRS uses an early intervention approach to service delivery
* data showing that service users feel safe to express cultural needs
* evidence that service users' cultural identity and lived experience have been respected
* examples showing how you actively encourage residents and their families to take part
* feedback showing that staff can provide culturally safe services, including respecting the cultural identity and lived experience of Aboriginal service users.

### Continuous improvement

The Regulator encourages a culture of continuous quality improvement in social services delivery.

This should ensure that standards are maintained and improved over the longer term.

There are many things you can do to help your service get better over time.

The Regulator encourages providers to put in place review and assessment checkpoints. This will help providers track whether they are meeting a Standard and make any changes needed.

Providers can:

* Draft and regularly review policies and procedures
* Train their staff in their policies and procedures
* Review feedback received from Regulator
* Participate in Community of Practices

### A note on policies and procedures

Documents which help guide decision making and what you expect staff to do in your SRS.

The Regulator may ask providers for documents and other evidence as part of monitoring and enforcing compliance with the Social Services Standards.

Our guidance often refers to documents like policies and procedures.

While creating documentation can feel overwhelming, here are some basic hints to help you create what you need and benefit your business

Tips:

* If someone looked at your documents, would they know what to do?
* Double check your policies and procedures relate to your requirements
* Make sure the documents cover scope and are accessible
* There is no need to be fancy – documents can be short and simple if they cover everything you need
* Are they easy to find?

#### Would someone know how to use your documents?

Documents should be:

* Kept up to date
* Reviewed periodically – with your staff feedback
* Easy to read
* In plain English where possible
* Contain concise information
* Clear with their instructions if someone is required to do something

#### Do your policies and procedures relate to your requirements?

Policies and procedures should:

* Be clear on what is required, who is responsible, when and how action should be taken
* Be reviewed periodically and refined / bolstered to reflect the services you deliver
* Include correct / up to date referencing of legislative requirements and standards
* Be familiar and understood well by you and your staff – this includes training where relevant

### Scope, scale and accessibility

* Documents including policies and procedures do not need to be long and should centre around the services you deliver
* Staff should have easy access to the most up to date documentation so they can deliver services safely
* Systems you have in place may be simple or complex: your documents should reflect that

## The Regulator’s approach to Standard 1

We have [information sheets about each social service standard on our website](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards).

Each information sheet has different sections to help you understand the standard and how you could demonstrate compliance.

### Standard 1 guidance

Information sheets for each Social Services Standards include:

* Checklists
* Outcomes
* Service requirements
* Indicators of Success

### How the Standards will be monitored

We are guided by principles of preventing harm and addressing risk.

The Regulator recognises that different providers have different resourcing and capacity. All providers must meet the Standards, although they may use different ways to achieve that.

Our major focus is on:

* educating service providers about the requirements
* providing support to help providers meet the Standards.

We take a proportionate and risk-based approach to meeting the Standards and focus on the areas of greatest risk, based on evidence and information.

We will:

* take a proportionate and risk-based approach to meeting the Standards
* focus on the areas of greatest risk, based on evidence and information

We may take enforcement action depending on factors such as:

* the impact and likelihood of harm to service users
* the provider’s approach to meeting the Standards

### Where do you get more information about your requirements?

It is important for SRS providers to read and understand the guidance as it will support your compliance with the new laws.

The Regulator is committed to providing you with guidance that supports you in meeting your requirements. The Regulator will seek feedback and build on this information over time.

All providers:

* [Reporting a notifiable incident](https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident)
* [Reporting changes to your organisational and operational information](https://www.vic.gov.au/reporting-changes-your-organisation)

SRS-specific information sheets:

* Notices to vacate
* Managing support plans
* Managing medication
* Staffing requirements
* Managing residents’ money
* Fees, charges and security deposit
* Using a Residential Services Agreement

All guidance and information is now live at [www.ssr.vic.gov.au](http://www.ssr.vic.gov.au/).

## Key takeaways

* The new laws have similarities and differences to the past SRS legislation
* SRS providers must proactively understand and meet the six Social Services Standards
* We are actively monitoring and supporting service provider compliance
* We have information and guidance on our website

## Getting in touch with the Social Services Regulator

For more information, start with our website.

For general enquiries: enquiries@ssr.vic.gov.au

For enquiries about registration: registration@ssr.vic.gov.au