**NCC Connect to Work – Annex 2c - SEQF vs IPS Fidelity**

The **Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF)** is a structured approach designed to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and consistency of supported employment services. These services aim to assist individuals with disabilities or other barriers to employment in securing and maintaining meaningful work within the open labour market.

**Key Components of SEQF**

1. **Principles and Values**  
   The SEQF emphasises core values such as:
   * **Inclusion**: Enabling individuals with disabilities to participate fully in the workforce.
   * **Personalisation**: Tailoring support to the unique needs, goals, and preferences of each individual.
   * **Empowerment**: Fostering independence and self-determination.
   * **Collaboration**: Partnering with employers, families, and other stakeholders.
2. **Stages of Supported Employment**  
   SEQF aligns with the recognised stages of supported employment, which include:
   * **Engagement**: Building trust and understanding the individual's goals.
   * **Vocational Profiling**: Identifying skills, interests, and aspirations.
   * **Job Finding**: Assisting in identifying and applying for appropriate roles.
   * **Employer Engagement**: Building relationships with employers and facilitating workplace adjustments.
   * **On-the-Job Support**: Providing ongoing support to both the employee and employer to ensure job retention.
   * **Career Development**: Supporting career progression and long-term employment goals.
3. **Quality Standards**  
   The framework sets standards to ensure consistency and effectiveness, such as:
   * Qualified and trained staff.
   * Evidence-based practices.
   * Ethical and respectful interactions with clients and employers.
   * Continuous evaluation and improvement of services.
4. **Outcome-Focused**  
   SEQF measures success based on outcomes like job placements, job retention rates, employee satisfaction, and the extent to which individuals achieve their career goals.
5. **Stakeholder Involvement**  
   The framework encourages active involvement from:
   * Job seekers and employees receiving support.
   * Employers who provide opportunities.
   * Families and communities that contribute to the individual's success.

**Benefits of SEQF**

* **For Service Users**: Ensures a structured, person-centred approach that increases the chances of achieving meaningful employment.
* **For Employers**: Provides guidance and support to create inclusive workplaces and foster long-term partnerships.
* **For Providers**: Offers a clear blueprint for delivering high-quality supported employment services.
* **For Funders and Policymakers**: Establishes accountability and helps allocate resources effectively.

**Application of SEQF**

SEQF is used by organisations providing supported employment services to:

* Assess and improve their practices.
* Train staff and standardise processes.
* Build trust and collaboration with employers.
* Evaluate the impact of their services to ensure alignment with individuals' needs and labour market trends.

The SEQF represents a commitment to delivering inclusive, sustainable employment opportunities for individuals who face barriers to work, promoting equality and diversity in the workplace.

The **Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Fidelity Assurance System** is a structured method used to evaluate and enhance the quality and fidelity of IPS services. IPS is a well-established, evidence-based approach to supported employment that helps individuals with mental health conditions or other significant barriers secure and retain competitive jobs. The Fidelity Assurance System ensures that IPS services adhere closely to the core principles of the model, which research shows are critical for achieving positive employment outcomes.

**Key Components of the IPS Fidelity Assurance System**

1. **Fidelity Scale**  
   At the heart of the IPS Fidelity Assurance System is the **IPS Fidelity Scale**, a detailed tool used to assess how closely a programme aligns with the evidence-based IPS model. The scale consists of several key domains, including:
   * **Staffing**: Ensuring the team has the appropriate structure and skills.
   * **Organisation**: Integrating employment services with mental health or other relevant services.
   * **Service Delivery**: Implementing person-centred, job-focused practices.

Each domain is broken down into specific criteria, with programmes rated on a scale (e.g., 1–5) to measure adherence.

1. **Principles of IPS**  
   The fidelity scale evaluates adherence to the eight core principles of IPS:
   * **Focus on Competitive Employment**: Prioritising jobs in the open labour market.
   * **Eligibility Based on Client Choice**: No exclusion based on readiness, symptoms, or other factors.
   * **Integration of Employment and Clinical Services**: Close collaboration between employment specialists and mental health teams.
   * **Attention to Client Preferences**: Tailoring job searches and placements to individual interests.
   * **Rapid Job Search**: Minimising delays between programme enrolment and job-seeking activities.
   * **Systematic Job Development**: Building relationships with employers to uncover opportunities.
   * **Time-Unlimited Support**: Providing ongoing support as long as it is needed and desired.
   * **Benefits Counselling**: Helping clients understand and navigate the impact of work on their benefits.
2. **Fidelity Reviews**  
   Fidelity reviews are conducted regularly by trained reviewers, who visit programmes to assess their adherence to the IPS model. These reviews typically include:
   * **Interviews**: Speaking with staff, clients, and stakeholders to gather insights.
   * **Observation**: Examining day-to-day operations, such as staff meetings or interactions with employers.
   * **Document Review**: Analysing case files, performance data, and other records.
3. **Scoring and Feedback**  
   After the review, programmes receive a detailed fidelity score, along with written feedback highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Scores are typically categorised into levels, such as:
   * **Good Fidelity**: Strong adherence to the IPS model.
   * **Fair Fidelity**: Moderate adherence, with room for improvement.
   * **Low Fidelity**: Significant departures from the model, requiring focused changes.
4. **Continuous Improvement**  
   Programmes use the feedback from fidelity reviews to develop action plans aimed at improving their services. This iterative process ensures ongoing alignment with the IPS model and fosters better outcomes for participants.

**Benefits of the IPS Fidelity Assurance System**

* **Improved Quality**: Ensures services consistently deliver evidence-based practices.
* **Enhanced Outcomes**: Helps participants achieve better employment outcomes, including higher job placement and retention rates.
* **Standardisation**: Promotes uniformity in IPS delivery across regions and organisations.
* **Accountability**: Provides a clear framework for monitoring and reporting programme performance.
* **Support for Growth**: Highlights areas where programmes can innovate or strengthen their practices.

**Application of the IPS Fidelity Assurance System**

The Fidelity Assurance System is used by:

* **Service Providers**: To benchmark their practices against the evidence-based model and identify improvements.
* **Funders and Policymakers**: To ensure programmes they support deliver high-quality, cost-effective services.
* **Clients and Families**: To gain confidence that services are designed to meet individual needs effectively.

In summary, the IPS Fidelity Assurance System is a cornerstone of maintaining high standards in supported employment services. By focusing on fidelity to the IPS model, it ensures that individuals receive the best possible support to achieve meaningful and sustainable employment.

The **Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF)** and the **Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Fidelity Assurance System** both serve as tools to ensure high-quality supported employment services, but they differ in scope, purpose, principles, and application. Below is a detailed comparison and explanation of the differences.

**1. Purpose and Scope**

* **SEQF**:
  + Focuses on ensuring the quality of supported employment services broadly.
  + It is applicable to a wide range of individuals with disabilities or barriers to employment, not limited to those with mental health conditions.
  + Addresses multiple aspects of service delivery, including values, stages of supported employment, and outcomes.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Specifically measures adherence to the IPS model, which is an evidence-based approach targeted at individuals with mental health conditions or co-occurring disabilities.
  + Its scope is narrower, focusing exclusively on maintaining fidelity to the IPS principles and practices.

**2. Underlying Principles**

* **SEQF**:
  + Emphasises inclusion, personalisation, empowerment, and collaboration across all types of supported employment services.
  + Has a more general focus on enabling people with disabilities to enter and thrive in the open labour market.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Centres on the eight specific principles of the IPS model, such as competitive employment, client choice, integration with clinical services, and rapid job search.
  + Strongly tied to evidence-based practices, with an emphasis on delivering measurable outcomes in mental health contexts.

**3. Evaluation Tools**

* **SEQF**:
  + Provides a conceptual framework for quality assessment, but it is less prescriptive and does not include a rigid scoring system.
  + Encourages continuous improvement by highlighting best practices and setting general standards for service delivery.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Utilises the IPS Fidelity Scale, a structured and detailed scoring tool.
  + The scale evaluates specific aspects of IPS implementation across staffing, organisation, and service delivery, with numerical ratings and categorisation (e.g., Good Fidelity, Fair Fidelity).

**4. Target Population**

* **SEQF**:
  + Broadly applicable to all individuals facing barriers to employment, including but not limited to those with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, and social disadvantages.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Designed for individuals with severe mental health conditions, often in collaboration with clinical mental health services.
  + Tailored to meet the unique challenges faced by this group, such as stigma and the need for rapid engagement.

**5. Stages and Processes**

* **SEQF**:
  + Focuses on the stages of supported employment, such as engagement, vocational profiling, job finding, employer engagement, on-the-job support, and career development.
  + Encourages a holistic approach to employment support.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Focuses on the integration of employment services with clinical care, rapid job search, and time-unlimited support.
  + Less emphasis on the broader stages of employment and more on specific, measurable fidelity to the IPS principles.

**6. Quality Improvement Approach**

* **SEQF**:
  + Provides a flexible framework that organisations can adapt to their context.
  + Encourages stakeholders to co-develop solutions and focus on person-centred improvements.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Uses periodic fidelity reviews and structured feedback to drive improvements.
  + Action plans are explicitly tied to fidelity scores, ensuring adherence to the evidence-based model.

**7. Stakeholder Involvement**

* **SEQF**:
  + Emphasises collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, families, and communities, alongside the service users themselves.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Primarily involves service users, employment specialists, mental health professionals, and employers directly related to the IPS programme.

**8. Flexibility vs. Rigidity**

* **SEQF**:
  + More flexible and adaptable to various types of supported employment models.
  + Focuses on values and principles rather than strict adherence to a specific methodology.
* **IPS Fidelity Assurance System**:
  + Rigid in its application, with an emphasis on strict adherence to the IPS model.
  + Fidelity is a key determinant of success and is monitored systematically.

**Summary of Key Differences**

| **Aspect** | **SEQF** | **IPS Fidelity Assurance System** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scope** | Broad, all supported employment models | Specific to the IPS model |
| **Target Population** | All individuals with barriers to employment | People with severe mental health conditions |
| **Principles** | Inclusion, personalisation, empowerment | Eight IPS principles |
| **Evaluation** | Conceptual framework | Structured fidelity scale |
| **Flexibility** | Adaptable | Rigid, evidence-based |
| **Stages Focused** | Broad stages of employment | Fidelity to IPS-specific processes |

**Conclusion**

While both SEQF and the IPS Fidelity Assurance System aim to ensure high-quality supported employment services, SEQF is broader, more adaptable, and focused on general best practices across various populations. The IPS Fidelity Assurance System is narrower in scope, targeting mental health contexts with a structured and evidence-driven approach that prioritises fidelity to the IPS model. Each system serves a distinct purpose and complements the other in promoting excellence in supported employment services.

[SEQF Model Fidelity Assessment Guide\_final\_0.pdf](https://www.base-uk.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/SEQF%20Model%20Fidelity%20Assessment%20Guide_final_0.pdf)

[IPS Supported Employment Fidelity Scale.doc](https://ipsworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IPS-Fidelity-Scale-Eng1.pdf)

