South Essex Homes’ Southend Careline service supports 6,500 service users in Essex who may feel vulnerable in their home. They recently had their second full standards audit with TSA. Margaret Hutchings, Supported Housing, Sheltered Housing and Careline Services Manager, explains what the audit experience was like.

Tell us about Southend Careline
We offer TEC installation and monitoring services and we’ve been operating for approximately 30 years. We have 15 Careline staff, one team leader and one manager.

Why did you apply for QSF accreditation?
It’s a nationally recognised standard. We also wanted to prove to ourselves and more importantly, to our clients, that our service was meeting a recognised standard of excellence.

How did you prepare for the audit process?
It’s about collating information and examples of good practice in one place as you move through the year and then, when required, this can be submitted, so very little preparation is required.

What was the actual audit like?
Very informal. The auditor was extremely helpful and informative.

What were the benefits of the process?
The auditor had more time to speak with staff, managers, senior executives and clients about our service and our progression.

What were you able to demonstrate to your auditor?
The auditor was able to accompany staff on visits to clients. They listened to staff responding to calls at the Control Centre. The auditor spoke to our senior management team regarding our commitment and vision for the service in the future.

Achieving accreditation – what does it mean?
For staff, it provides a sense of achievement across the whole team and pride in working in our service. As a company, it gives us pride in knowing our service meets a national standard. For our service users, it provides assurance of a quality service.

What would you say to another TEC organisation that is unsure about applying for QSF?
I would recommend they go for it. It appears quite daunting but it’s just what you do every day.

For more information about South Essex Homes’ Southend Careline service click here