

SEI AM4

ACTIVITY MODULE 4 – HORSE THERAPY AND CARE SERVICES

Module Introduction

1. Purpose and Application

AM4 – Horse Therapy and Care Services establishes the requirements applicable to organisations providing structured therapeutic, rehabilitative, developmental, educational or care-related services in which horses form a material part of the intervention or service. AM4 may apply to equine-assisted psychotherapy, equine-assisted learning, hippotherapy, therapeutic or adaptive riding, therapeutic carriage activities, structured equine-assisted interventions and comparable services involving interaction between horses and beneficiaries. The Module applies according to the activities actually undertaken and does not assume that every equine-assisted activity constitutes healthcare, psychotherapy or another regulated professional service. Where an organisation uses terminology such as therapy, treatment, rehabilitation, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, or clinical intervention, it shall be able to demonstrate that the terminology, professional involvement, and services provided are consistent with applicable legal and professional requirements.

2. Dual Duty of Care

Horse therapy and care services create a distinctive dual duty of care.

The organisation shall protect:

- a) the health, safety, dignity and wellbeing of the human beneficiary; and
- b) the physical, behavioural and mental wellbeing of the horse participating in the service.

A perceived or actual benefit to a beneficiary shall not justify avoidable pain, fear, exhaustion, distress or inappropriate workload for a horse. Similarly, horse welfare protection shall be incorporated into service design rather than treated as a secondary consideration after therapeutic or commercial objectives have been established.

3. Nature of the Service

The organisation shall clearly distinguish between:

- regulated therapeutic or healthcare interventions;
- equine-assisted psychotherapy;
- hippotherapy or comparable clinically directed interventions;
- therapeutic or adaptive riding;
- equine-assisted learning;
- educational or developmental activities;
- recreational activities with therapeutic or wellbeing characteristics; and
- other equine-assisted services.

This distinction is necessary because professional qualifications, clinical governance, safeguarding, consent, record management, and claims concerning outcomes may differ materially depending on the service provided.

4. Horse Agency and Suitability

A horse participating in therapeutic or care services shall be recognised as a sentient participant whose physical and behavioural responses provide material information regarding its suitability and wellbeing. Selection of a horse shall therefore consider temperament, health, soundness, physical capacity, training, previous experience, behavioural characteristics and compatibility with the intended activity. Continued participation shall depend upon ongoing suitability rather than initial selection alone. Resistance, avoidance, anxiety, fear, pain, abnormal behaviour, lethargy or exhaustion shall not automatically be interpreted as disobedience and shall trigger appropriate assessment. Welfare guidance specifically identifies willingness to work, confidence, calmness, and the absence of anxiety, fear, pain, anger, and frustration as relevant indicators of mental wellbeing.

5. Professional Boundaries

Services shall be delivered within the professional competence and legal authority of the persons involved. Equine competence alone shall not qualify a person to provide a regulated healthcare or psychological service. Conversely, clinical or therapeutic qualifications alone shall not demonstrate competence to manage horses safely and appropriately. Where necessary, services shall therefore operate through a multidisciplinary approach combining appropriate human-service and equine competence.

6. Relationship with AM1 and Other Activity Modules

Where therapy or care services operate from facilities assessed under AM1, equivalent requirements concerning accommodation, feeding, water, infrastructure, manure, waste, biosecurity, emergency arrangements and routine horse care may be recognised without unnecessary duplication. AM4 focuses on the additional impacts and responsibilities arising from the therapeutic or care relationship between beneficiary, professional and horse. Where riding instruction is also provided, AM2 may additionally apply depending on certification scope. Where horse transport is incidental to therapy or care services, relevant horse-wellbeing and beneficiary-safety responsibilities shall remain controlled within the activity. Where the organisation itself undertakes horse transport as a material, routine or separately certified activity, AM7 – Transport & Logistics shall additionally apply according to the defined certification scope.

7. AM4 Criteria Hierarchy and Assessment Logic

The AM4 criteria follow the sequence of a responsible Horse Therapy and Care Service

AUTHORITY & SERVICE SCOPE → PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE → BENEFICIARY ASSESSMENT → HORSE SUITABILITY → HORSE-BENEFICIARY MATCHING → SESSION DESIGN → WORKLOAD & RECOVERY → BEHAVIOURAL WELFARE → SAFEGUARDING & CONSENT → SAFETY & EMERGENCY RESPONSE → CLINICAL/PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE → BIOSECURITY & HYGIENE → ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION → RESOURCE & ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT → PEOPLE & ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITY → MEASURE → CORRECT → IMPROVE → COMMUNICATE

The hierarchy is intentional. Services should begin only when the organisation has established that the professional competence, the participant, the horse, and the environment are suitable for the intended activity.

Criterion AM4-1 – Legal Authority and Applicable Service Requirements

The organisation shall demonstrate that horse therapy and care services are lawfully undertaken and comply with applicable equine, healthcare, safeguarding, occupational, accessibility, data protection, and other mandatory requirements relevant to the services provided.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-1.1 Applicable licences, registrations, professional authorisations and organisational approvals shall be identified and maintained. The organisation shall be able to demonstrate that these remain current and applicable to the actual services, locations and professional activities included within the certification scope.

AM4-1.2 Applicable requirements relating to equine welfare, healthcare, therapy, safeguarding, occupational safety, accessibility and data protection shall be identified according to the nature of the service. The resulting obligations shall be translated into operational controls proportionate to the beneficiaries, horses, personnel and service conditions concerned.

AM4-1.3 Where regulated professional services are provided, relevant professional registration or authorisation shall be verifiable. Evidence shall correspond with the professional role actually performed and with any limitations, conditions or renewal requirements attached to that authority.

AM4-1.4 Responsibilities between the equine organisation and external healthcare, education, social care, or other professional providers shall be defined where relevant. The allocation shall be sufficiently clear to prevent gaps in beneficiary care, horse wellbeing, safeguarding, information management or emergency response.

AM4-1.5 Changes in applicable legal or professional requirements shall be identified and incorporated into affected activities. Affected procedures, responsibilities and service arrangements shall be reviewed so that operations continue to reflect current mandatory and professional obligations.

Indicators

- Applicable legal requirements are identified.
- Required professional authorisations are current.
- Service terminology corresponds with legal status.
- External professional responsibilities are defined.
- Changes result in updated controls.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes licences, professional registrations, policies, contracts, service descriptions and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where requirements are substantially controlled but isolated administrative or updating deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where regulated services are knowingly provided without required professional authority, safeguarding obligations are materially disregarded, or the organisation materially misrepresents its legal or professional status.

Criterion AM4-2 – Service Scope and Professional Boundaries

The organisation shall clearly define the equine-assisted services it provides and ensure that activities remain within organisational and individual professional competence.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-2.1 Each material service type shall be defined. The definition shall identify the nature and boundaries of the service sufficiently to distinguish what the organisation is and is not professionally undertaking.

AM4-2.2 Therapeutic, clinical, educational, developmental and recreational activities shall be appropriately distinguished. Terminology, programme design and public descriptions shall remain consistent with the actual level of professional involvement and the nature of the intervention delivered.

AM4-2.3 Professional responsibilities for each service shall be established. The allocation shall identify who is accountable for beneficiary, equine, professional and supporting functions relevant to safe and effective delivery.

AM4-2.4 Persons shall not diagnose, treat or provide regulated professional interventions beyond their qualifications or authority. Role boundaries shall be respected in practice, including where equine, therapeutic, healthcare, educational or social-care responsibilities operate together.

AM4-2.5 Referral or collaboration arrangements shall exist where beneficiary needs extend beyond available competence. Such arrangements shall enable timely access to appropriate expertise without presenting referral or collaboration as a substitute for competence that the organisation itself is required to maintain.

Indicators

- Service categories are clearly defined.
- Professional boundaries are understood.
- Appropriate specialists are involved.
- Referral mechanisms exist.
- Marketing corresponds with actual competence.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes service documentation, qualifications, programmes, referral arrangements and public communications.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where scope is substantially clear but isolated descriptions or responsibilities require clarification.

Major non-conformity: Arises where persons knowingly undertake regulated or specialist interventions materially outside their competence or authority.

Criterion AM4-3 – Governance and Allocation of Responsibility

The organisation shall establish clear responsibility for beneficiary wellbeing, horse welfare, service delivery, safeguarding and emergency management.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-3.1 Management responsibility for AM4 activities shall be assigned. The assigned person or function shall have sufficient authority to coordinate the service and ensure that significant beneficiary, horse welfare, safeguarding, and compliance matters receive appropriate attention.

AM4-3.2 Responsibility for each horse during therapy or care activities shall be clear. This shall include clarity regarding monitoring, handling, workload, withdrawal from activity and escalation where the horse shows signs of compromised well-being.

AM4-3.3 Responsibility for beneficiary assessment and supervision shall be defined. The allocation shall cover initial suitability, changing needs, activity supervision and escalation where the beneficiary's condition or circumstances materially alter.

AM4-3.4 Interfaces between equine personnel, therapists, healthcare professionals, carers, volunteers and other participants shall be controlled. Roles, handovers, and communication points shall be sufficiently defined to prevent omissions, conflicting instructions, or assumptions among persons involved in the service.

AM4-3.5 Material incidents, concerns, and conflicts between therapeutic and horse-welfare objectives shall have defined escalation routes. Escalation arrangements shall identify who may intervene, modify or stop an activity and how unresolved conflicts are referred for competent decision-making.

Indicators

- Governance responsibilities are identifiable.
- Horse and beneficiary responsibilities are clear.
- Multidisciplinary roles are coordinated.
- Escalation routes exist.
- Welfare conflicts are resolved systematically.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes organisational charts, job descriptions, procedures, agreements and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where governance generally functions but individual responsibilities are insufficiently documented.

Major non-conformity: Arises where unclear responsibility creates significant unmanaged risk to horses or beneficiaries.

Criterion AM4-4 – Beneficiary Assessment and Suitability

Participation shall be based on sufficient assessment to determine whether the proposed equine-assisted service is appropriate and can be undertaken safely.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-4.1 Relevant physical, psychological, behavioural, communication or support needs shall be identified according to the service provided. The depth of assessment shall be proportionate to the activity, foreseeable risks and the level of professional or physical support required for safe participation.

AM4-4.2 Contraindications and material risk factors shall be considered by appropriately competent people. The assessment shall consider whether identified conditions could materially affect safe interaction with horses, participation, emergency response or the appropriateness of the proposed service.

AM4-4.3 Additional support, equipment or professional involvement required by the beneficiary shall be identified. These needs shall be incorporated into planning before participation so that necessary adaptations or competent support are available when the activity is delivered.

AM4-4.4 Participation shall be reconsidered where circumstances materially change. Reassessment shall address changes in health, behaviour, mobility, communication, medication, confidence, or other circumstances that may alter suitability or risk.

AM4-4.5 Where the organisation lacks competence to determine suitability, appropriate external professional input shall be obtained. The external input shall be relevant to the decision being made and shall be considered before participation proceeds where material uncertainty remains.

Indicators

- Beneficiary suitability is assessed.
- Contraindications are considered.
- Support needs are identified.
- Changes trigger reassessment.
- Specialist advice is obtained where necessary.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes assessment procedures, anonymised or appropriately controlled records, professional input and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where assessment is generally appropriate but individual documentation or reassessment is incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where a beneficiary knowingly participates despite a significant identified contraindication or material risk without appropriate professional assessment.

Criterion AM4-5 – Horse Selection and Initial Suitability

Horses used in therapy and care services shall be individually selected for suitability for the intended activities.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-5.1 Selection shall consider temperament, health, soundness, physical capacity, training and behavioural characteristics. The assessment shall consider the individual horse rather than relying solely on breed, age, previous use or general assumptions concerning suitability.

AM4-5.2 Previous experience and response to unfamiliar people, movement, equipment, noise and physical contact shall be considered. The evaluation shall reflect the types of beneficiary interaction and environmental stimuli reasonably expected within the intended service.

AM4-5.3 Horses shall be physically capable of the intended mounted or unmounted activity. Physical capability shall be evaluated in relation to activity duration, beneficiary characteristics, equipment, surface and any additional demands created by the service.

AM4-5.4 Horses showing persistent fear, aggression, pain, significant anxiety or other incompatible behaviour shall not be assigned until appropriately evaluated. Evaluation shall consider whether the underlying cause can be addressed and whether future participation can occur without creating significant foreseeable welfare or safety risk.

AM4-5.5 Suitability shall be documented or otherwise demonstrable for each horse. Evidence shall be sufficient to show the basis on which the horse was accepted for the service and any material limitations placed on its use.

Indicators

- Horses are intentionally selected.
- Physical and behavioural suitability is evaluated.
- Activity-specific demands are considered.
- Unsuitable horses are withheld.
- Selection is evidence-based.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes horse profiles, veterinary or professional information, observation and staff interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where horses are generally suitable, but individual assessment records or criteria are incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where a horse known to be materially unsuitable is deliberately used, and this creates significant foreseeable risk.

Criterion AM4-6 – Continuing Fitness and Welfare Assessment of Therapy Horses

Horse suitability shall be continuously reviewed because physical, behavioural and mental conditions may change over time.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-6.1 Horses shall receive routine observation before participation. Observation shall be appropriate to the intended activity and capable of identifying obvious changes that may affect fitness, willingness or safe participation.

AM4-6.2 Soundness, injury, illness, fatigue and behavioural state shall be considered. Findings shall be considered together so that physical or behavioural indicators are not assessed in isolation where they may indicate a wider welfare concern.

AM4-6.3 Material changes in willingness, behaviour, gait, posture or physical condition shall trigger evaluation. Evaluation shall be proportionate to the significance and persistence of the change and shall include professional or veterinary input where reasonably indicated.

AM4-6.4 Horses shall be removed temporarily or permanently from activities where continued participation is inappropriate. The decision shall prioritise the horse's current condition and welfare over programme continuity, beneficiary preference, or operational convenience.

AM4-6.5 Return to activity following significant illness or injury shall be appropriately controlled. Return shall consider recovery, relevant professional advice and the demands of the intended activity, with workload or participation adjusted where necessary.

Indicators

- Horses are assessed before work.
- Physical and behavioural changes are recognised.
- Removal from service is possible.
- Veterinary advice is obtained where necessary.
- Return to work is controlled.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes horse observations, workload records, veterinary evidence and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where monitoring is generally effective but isolated recording or follow-up deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where an injured, unsound, exhausted or otherwise materially unfit horse is knowingly required to continue participating.

Criterion AM4-7 – Horse–Beneficiary Matching

The organisation shall match horses and beneficiaries based on physical, behavioural, therapeutic, and safety considerations.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-7.1 Matching shall consider beneficiary size, mobility, balance, behaviour, confidence, communication and relevant support requirements. The matching decision shall reflect the actual demands of the proposed activity and the degree of physical, behavioural or communication support that may be required.

AM4-7.2 Horse size, conformation, gait, temperament, training and physical capacity shall be considered. These characteristics shall be considered in combination with the beneficiary's needs so that the pairing remains compatible with the horse's well-being and safe service delivery.

AM4-7.3 Previous horse–beneficiary interaction shall inform future matching where appropriate. Relevant positive or adverse responses shall be considered where they provide useful evidence concerning suitability, confidence, communication or stress within the pairing.

AM4-7.4 Matching shall be reviewed where either horse or beneficiary circumstances change. Review shall occur before continuing the same pairing where the change could materially affect welfare, safety, comfort or the intended service outcome.

AM4-7.5 Commercial scheduling convenience shall not override material suitability considerations. Where scheduling conflicts with an appropriate match, the activity shall be adjusted, reassigned or postponed rather than knowingly maintaining an unsuitable pairing.

Indicators

- Matching is deliberate rather than arbitrary.
- Horse and beneficiary characteristics are considered together.
- Previous responses influence subsequent allocation.
- Changes trigger reassessment.
- Welfare and safety override convenience.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes scheduling, horse profiles, beneficiary assessment processes and observation.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where matching is generally appropriate, but the rationale is inconsistently documented.

Major non-conformity: Arises where a clearly inappropriate pairing is knowingly maintained despite a significant welfare or safety risk.

Criterion AM4-8 – Session Planning and Individual Objectives

Equine-assisted sessions shall be structured around defined objectives appropriate to the nature of the service and the beneficiary's needs.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-8.1 Material objectives shall be established for structured programmes where appropriate. Objectives shall be proportionate to the nature of the service and sufficiently clear to guide activity selection, progression and subsequent review.

AM4-8.2 Activities shall correspond with beneficiary ability and intended outcomes. The selected activity shall remain within the beneficiary's assessed capacity and the defined professional scope of the service being delivered.

AM4-8.3 Horse welfare requirements shall be incorporated into session planning. Planning shall account for horse suitability, workload, rest, behavioural response, and any foreseeable interactions that could affect horse wellbeing.

AM4-8.4 Session duration, intensity and progression shall be appropriate to both horse and beneficiary. These factors shall be adjusted where necessary to prevent avoidable fatigue, distress, loss of confidence or other adverse responses in either participant.

AM4-8.5 Plans shall be adapted where observations or outcomes indicate that modification is necessary. Adaptation shall be timely and proportionate, with material changes communicated to relevant personnel where they affect professional, safety or horse-welfare responsibilities.

Indicators

- Sessions have an identifiable purpose.
- Activities reflect beneficiary needs.
- Horse welfare is integrated into planning.
- Duration and intensity are controlled.
- Programmes are adaptable.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes session plans, schedules, observations and professional interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where sessions are generally appropriate but individual planning or outcome evidence is incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where activities materially disregard identified beneficiary or horse limitations.

Criterion AM4-9 – Horse Workload, Rest and Recovery

Therapy horses shall have workloads that protect their physical and mental well-being and provide sufficient rest, recovery and normal horse activity.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-9.1 Individual horse workload shall be known. Workload information shall be sufficiently reliable to understand the frequency and cumulative demands placed on each horse across relevant AM4 activities.

AM4-9.2 Session frequency, duration, intensity, mounted load and emotional demands shall be considered. These factors shall be considered together and in relation to the horse's fitness, behaviour, age, health and other work undertaken during the same period.

AM4-9.3 Adequate rest and recovery shall be provided between and following activities. Rest arrangements shall reflect the intensity and cumulative demand of the work and shall allow the horse to recover before further material activity.

AM4-9.4 Horses shall have opportunities for turnout, free movement, social interaction and normal horse behaviour outside therapeutic work. These opportunities shall form a meaningful part of the horse's management and shall not be routinely displaced by service demand or scheduling pressure.

AM4-9.5 Workload shall be reduced where physical or behavioural evidence indicates fatigue or declining willingness. Scheduling shall be adjusted promptly where the horse's physical condition, behaviour or willingness indicates that the planned workload is no longer appropriate.

Indicators

- Individual workloads are traceable.
- Rest periods are planned.
- Therapy work is balanced with normal horse life.
- Fatigue affects scheduling.
- Commercial demand does not determine maximum workload.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes schedules, horse records, turnout arrangements and observations.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where workload is generally appropriate but individual records or rest planning are incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where horses are systematically overworked or denied sufficient recovery, resulting in significant physical or behavioural welfare compromise.

Criterion AM4-10 – Behavioural and Mental Wellbeing of Therapy Horses

Horse behaviour shall be actively observed as a welfare indicator and shall influence participation and service design.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-10.1 Personnel shall be able to recognise relevant signs of stress, anxiety, fear, pain, frustration, avoidance and fatigue. Competence shall be appropriate to the person's role and sufficient to support timely recognition, reporting and intervention where behavioural signs indicate compromised welfare.

AM4-10.2 Persistent resistance or withdrawal shall not automatically be treated as disobedience. The possibility of discomfort, confusion, fear, fatigue, poor matching or other underlying causes shall be considered before corrective handling or training responses are applied.

AM4-10.3 Horses shall have a reasonable opportunity to disengage or be removed where interaction is causing material distress. Personnel shall have practical authority to pause, adapt or terminate the interaction where continued participation is inconsistent with the horse's welfare.

AM4-10.4 Recurring behavioural concerns shall trigger review of workload, health, environment, horse–beneficiary matching and handling. The review shall consider interacting causes and result in appropriate adjustment where a recurring pattern indicates that current arrangements are not effective.

AM4-10.5 Positive welfare indicators shall also be considered when evaluating suitability. Indicators such as willingness, calm engagement, confidence and appropriate recovery shall contribute to a balanced assessment of the horse's continuing participation.

Indicators

- Behaviour is used as welfare evidence.
- Negative responses trigger action.
- Horses can be removed from sessions.
- Root causes are investigated.
- A positive mental state is considered.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes direct observation, behavioural records, staff interviews and corrective actions.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where behavioural monitoring exists but individual interpretation or follow-up is inconsistent.

Major non-conformity: Arises where clear, repeated signs of significant distress, pain or exhaustion are knowingly ignored.

Criterion AM4-11 – Handling, Restraint and Equipment

Handling methods and equipment shall protect the physical and psychological well-being of horses and beneficiaries.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-11.1 Horses shall be handled calmly and consistently. Handling shall be appropriate to the horse's experience and behavioural state and shall avoid unnecessary force, fear, confusion or escalation.

AM4-11.2 Equipment shall be suitable for the horse, beneficiary and activity. Suitability shall consider fit, function, condition, beneficiary support needs and the physical demands placed on the horse during the intended use.

AM4-11.3 Adaptive equipment shall be appropriately fitted and maintained. Fit and condition shall be checked at intervals appropriate to use, particularly where beneficiary needs or equipment configuration can change.

AM4-11.4 Restrictive or coercive methods shall not be used merely to force participation by an unwilling or distressed horse. Where a horse is unwilling or distressed, the underlying reason shall be considered, and the activity adapted, paused or discontinued as appropriate.

AM4-11.5 Equipment condition and fit shall be periodically checked. Checks shall be sufficient to identify wear, damage, poor fit, or changes that could cause discomfort, injury, or unsafe support for the beneficiary.

Indicators

- Handling is humane.
- Equipment is suitable.
- Adaptive equipment is controlled.
- Coercion is avoided.
- Equipment is maintained.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes observation, tack and equipment inspection and staff interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where controls are generally effective but isolated equipment or checking deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where inappropriate equipment, restraint or handling causes or creates significant foreseeable pain, injury or distress.

Criterion AM4-12 – Beneficiary Consent, Choice and Dignity

Beneficiaries shall participate with appropriate consent and shall be treated with dignity, respect and reasonable choice throughout the service.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-12.1 Appropriate informed consent shall be obtained according to age, capacity and applicable requirements. The consent process shall reflect the nature of the service, the beneficiary's understanding and any legal or professional requirements applicable to the activity.

AM4-12.2 Parent, guardian or authorised representative consent shall be obtained where required. The organisation shall be able to demonstrate that the person providing consent has the appropriate authority and has received sufficient relevant information.

AM4-12.3 Beneficiaries shall receive understandable information concerning the nature of the activity and material risks. Information shall be communicated in a form appropriate to the beneficiary's age, capacity and communication needs so that participation is meaningfully understood.

AM4-12.4 Refusal, fear or withdrawal shall be managed sensitively and shall not be overridden merely to complete a scheduled activity. Personnel shall respond proportionately to signs of discomfort or unwillingness and shall consider whether adaptation, reassurance, postponement or withdrawal is appropriate.

AM4-12.5 Privacy and dignity shall be protected. Service delivery, assistance, communication, record handling and physical interaction shall be managed in a manner that respects the beneficiary as an individual.

Indicators

- Consent arrangements are appropriate.
- Information is understandable.
- Beneficiary choice is respected.
- Fear is managed appropriately.
- Dignity is maintained.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes consent processes, participant information and observation.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where consent is substantially effective but individual documentation or information is incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where required consent is knowingly absent or vulnerable persons are materially coerced into participation.

Criterion AM4-13 – Safeguarding and Vulnerable Persons

Organisations working with children or vulnerable people shall maintain appropriate safeguarding controls.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-13.1 Applicable safeguarding requirements shall be identified. The organisation shall determine which safeguarding obligations apply to its beneficiary groups, personnel, volunteers, activities and operating jurisdiction.

AM4-13.2 Appropriate screening, vetting, or background-check requirements shall be implemented. Checks shall correspond with applicable legal and organisational requirements and shall be completed before people undertake roles requiring such clearance.

AM4-13.3 Boundaries for physical assistance, communication, photography and interaction shall be defined. The boundaries shall be communicated to relevant personnel and applied consistently, with particular care where beneficiaries require close physical or communication support.

AM4-13.4 Safeguarding concerns shall have defined reporting and escalation procedures. Procedures shall identify how concerns are recorded, protected, referred and escalated, including circumstances requiring external reporting or specialist involvement.

AM4-13.5 Personnel shall receive safeguarding instruction appropriate to their role. The instruction shall enable personnel to recognise relevant concerns, understand professional boundaries, and use the correct reporting and escalation routes.

Indicators

- Safeguarding responsibilities are defined.
- Required vetting is complete.
- Professional boundaries are understood.
- Reporting routes exist.
- Personnel are trained.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes safeguarding policies, vetting evidence, training and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where safeguarding is substantially effective but isolated administrative deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where mandatory safeguarding controls are absent, serious concerns are knowingly unreported or vulnerable persons are exposed to significant unmanaged risk.

Criterion AM4-14 – Safety and Activity Risk Management

Material risks associated with interaction between beneficiaries, horses, personnel, equipment and facilities shall be identified and controlled.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-14.1 Activity-specific hazards shall be assessed. Assessment shall consider the interaction between beneficiary capability, horse behaviour, personnel, equipment, environment and the specific activity being undertaken.

AM4-14.2 Controls shall reflect the beneficiary's ability and horse behaviour. Controls shall be adapted where individual characteristics, changing circumstances or observed responses indicate that standard arrangements are insufficient.

AM4-14.3 Mounting, dismounting, transfers, and physical assistance shall be appropriately controlled where applicable. Controls shall address competent assistance, equipment, positioning, horse behaviour, and the beneficiary's physical needs during these higher-risk transitions.

AM4-14.4 Supervision ratios shall reflect activity complexity and beneficiary needs. Staffing and supervision shall remain sufficient to meet the foreseeable assistance, communication, and emergency demands of the beneficiaries and horses involved.

AM4-14.5 Incidents and near misses shall be recorded and evaluated. Evaluation shall determine whether immediate correction, wider risk review, additional training or changes to activity design are necessary to prevent recurrence.

Indicators

- Activity risks are understood.
- Controls are individualised.
- Higher-risk transitions are supervised.
- Staffing is appropriate.
- Incidents result in learning.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes risk assessments, observation, incident records and staffing arrangements.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where risk controls are generally appropriate but isolated documentation or review deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where significant foreseeable activity risks remain knowingly uncontrolled.

Criterion AM4-15 – Emergency and Medical Response

The organisation shall maintain emergency arrangements appropriate to horses, beneficiaries and the nature of therapeutic or care services provided. Immediate response shall prioritise horse wellbeing, beneficiary safety and appropriate professional intervention, with subsequent communication managed according to the sensitivity of the incident and the confidentiality requirements of the service.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-15.1 Foreseeable medical, behavioural, equine and facility emergencies shall be considered. Planning shall reflect the service type, beneficiary characteristics, horse activities, location and the level of professional support reasonably required.

AM4-15.2 Appropriate first-aid capability shall be available. The capability shall be proportionate to foreseeable injury or medical needs and shall be available throughout relevant service activities.

AM4-15.3 Emergency access and communication arrangements shall be maintained. Arrangements shall support timely contact with emergency services and practical access to beneficiaries, horses and relevant activity areas when needed.

AM4-15.4 Relevant beneficiary emergency information shall be available to authorised persons where necessary and lawful. Access shall be limited to information reasonably necessary for emergency response and managed in accordance with applicable confidentiality and data-protection requirements.

AM4-15.5 Emergency procedures shall be periodically reviewed and, where appropriate, practised. Following a significant incident, response effectiveness shall be reviewed and, where the incident becomes publicly relevant, subsequent external communication shall be managed in accordance with CML-18 and applicable confidentiality, consent and safeguarding requirements.

Indicators

- Emergency scenarios are identified.
- First-aid capability exists.
- Emergency services can access the activity.
- Critical information is controlled and accessible.
- Procedures are tested.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes emergency plans, first-aid resources, emergency access and communication arrangements, controlled beneficiary information, exercises and interviews. Where significant incidents have occurred, verification shall include evidence of response review and, where publicly relevant, appropriate referral to the communication controls established under CML-18.

Minor non-conformity: Arises when arrangements are generally effective but isolated deficiencies in updating or testing exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where foreseeable serious emergencies lack reasonable response arrangements.

Criterion AM4-16 – Clinical and Professional Coordination

Where therapy or care involves healthcare, psychological, rehabilitation or other professional services, the equine activity shall be appropriately integrated with the responsible professional framework.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-16.1 The responsible professional shall be identifiable. The role, professional authority and scope of responsibility shall be clear to personnel involved in the relevant programme or intervention.

AM4-16.2 Therapeutic objectives and equine activities shall be appropriately coordinated.

Coordination shall ensure that therapeutic intentions remain compatible with the horse's suitability, workload, handling requirements, and safe equine practice.

AM4-16.3 Relevant observations shall be communicated between authorised professionals where necessary. Communication shall be limited to relevant information and shall respect professional confidentiality, consent, and data protection requirements.

AM4-16.4 Changes in beneficiary condition shall result in appropriate professional review. The review shall occur before continuing or materially changing the activity where the change may affect suitability, risk or professional objectives.

AM4-16.5 Equine personnel shall not independently alter clinical objectives beyond their competence. Any concern affecting a clinical objective shall be referred to the responsible professional while equine personnel retain authority to act on immediate horse-welfare or safety concerns.

Indicators

- Professional responsibility is clear.
- Equine and therapeutic work are coordinated.
- Relevant information is communicated.
- Changes trigger review.
- Professional boundaries are maintained.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes programme arrangements, professional qualifications, records and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where coordination generally functions but individual communication or documentation is incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where a lack of professional coordination creates a significant clinical, safety or welfare risk.

Criterion AM4-17 – Confidentiality, Records and Data Protection

Beneficiary and service information shall be managed lawfully, securely and proportionately.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-17.1 Personal data, including health, therapeutic and other sensitive or special-category information, shall be collected and processed only where relevant to the service and on an appropriate lawful basis in accordance with applicable data-protection requirements. The organisation shall apply data minimisation so that the collection and use of data are proportionate to the purpose, risks, and professional obligations associated with the service.

AM4-17.2 Access shall be restricted to authorised people. Access controls shall reflect role and legitimate need, with sensitive information protected against unnecessary viewing, disclosure, alteration or loss.

AM4-17.3 Health and therapeutic information shall receive appropriate protection. Protection shall be proportionate to sensitivity and include appropriate controls for storage, transmission, discussion, access and authorised professional use.

AM4-17.4 Photography, video and testimonials involving beneficiaries shall have appropriate consent. Consent shall cover the intended use and audience and shall not be presumed merely because a beneficiary participates in the service.

AM4-17.5 Retention and disposal of records shall follow applicable requirements. Retention periods and disposal methods shall be appropriate to the record type, professional obligations and applicable legal or contractual requirements.

Indicators

- Sensitive data are controlled.
- Access is restricted.
- Media consent is traceable.
- Records are securely maintained.
- Retention arrangements exist.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes privacy procedures, consent records and information controls.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where controls are substantially effective but isolated administrative deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where sensitive beneficiary information is deliberately or systematically mishandled or disclosed without lawful basis.

Criterion AM4-18 – Biosecurity, Hygiene and Infection Prevention

Therapy and care services shall maintain hygiene and biosecurity appropriate to interactions between horses, beneficiaries, personnel and equipment.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-18.1 Relevant horse and human infection risks shall be identified. Assessment shall consider horse-to-horse, horse-to-human, human-to-horse and equipment-mediated pathways relevant to the service and beneficiary population.

AM4-18.2 Hand hygiene and cleaning arrangements shall be appropriate to the activity. Controls shall reflect the degree of physical contact, shared equipment, beneficiary vulnerability and foreseeable contamination associated with the activity.

AM4-18.3 Shared adaptive or therapeutic equipment shall be appropriately cleaned. Cleaning methods and frequency shall be appropriate to material type, frequency of use and the level of contact between horses and beneficiaries.

AM4-18.4 Horses with suspected contagious disease shall be managed according to appropriate biosecurity procedures. Measures shall include appropriate separation, hygiene, professional assessment, and restrictions on participation, depending on the suspected risk.

AM4-18.5 Vulnerable beneficiaries shall receive additional consideration where infection risk is material. Additional precautions shall be proportionate to the beneficiary's susceptibility and the nature of the infection pathway or exposure concerned.

Indicators

- Infection pathways are understood.
- Hygiene controls are implemented.
- Shared equipment is cleaned.
- Sick horses are appropriately managed.
- Vulnerability influences controls.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes hygiene arrangements, cleaning procedures, veterinary records and observation.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where controls are generally effective but isolated hygiene deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where a significant known infection risk is knowingly uncontrolled.

Criterion AM4-19 – Accessibility, Inclusion and Equitable Participation

Facilities and services shall seek to enable safe and dignified participation, in accordance with the beneficiary's needs and the organisation's reasonable capacity.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-19.1 Material physical and communication accessibility needs shall be considered. Consideration shall relate to the actual service environment and communication method and shall identify barriers capable of materially restricting safe and dignified participation.

AM4-19.2 Reasonable adaptations shall be evaluated where required and practicable. Evaluation shall consider effectiveness, safety, horse welfare, available competence, and the organisation's reasonable operational capacity.

AM4-19.3 Adaptations shall not create unacceptable horse-welfare or safety risks. Where an adaptation creates material additional risk, an alternative arrangement shall be considered before participation proceeds.

AM4-19.4 Beneficiaries shall not be subject to inappropriate discrimination. Participation decisions shall be based on relevant service, safety, welfare and professional considerations rather than unjustified personal characteristics.

AM4-19.5 Limitations on participation shall have objective safety, welfare, professional or operational justification. The rationale shall be proportionate to the identified limitation and capable of being explained or evidenced where the decision materially restricts participation.

Indicators

- Accessibility needs are assessed.
- Reasonable adaptations are considered.
- Adaptation protects horse welfare.
- Participation decisions are objective.
- Dignity is maintained.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes facilities, equipment, policies and beneficiary processes.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where accessibility is substantially considered, but individual reasonable improvements remain outstanding.

Major non-conformity: Arises where unlawful discriminatory practices or knowingly unsafe adaptations occur.

Criterion AM4-20 – Horse Healthcare and Preventive Management

Therapy horses shall receive preventive and responsive healthcare appropriate to their work and individual condition.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-20.1 Routine veterinary, dental, hoof and preventive healthcare shall be maintained. The programme of care shall reflect the horse's age, health, workload, environment and individual needs and shall be maintained at appropriate intervals.

AM4-20.2 Health concerns shall receive timely professional assessment. Assessment shall be obtained without undue delay where signs, symptoms or changes indicate that continued activity may be inappropriate or require treatment.

AM4-20.3 Therapeutic substances shall be appropriately controlled. Use, storage, administration and records shall comply with applicable veterinary, professional and medication requirements and shall support fitness-to-participate decisions.

AM4-20.4 Chronic conditions shall be evaluated for compatibility with continued therapy work. The evaluation shall consider treatment, prognosis, pain, mobility, workload and foreseeable effect of participation on the horse's condition.

AM4-20.5 Health records shall support continuing fitness decisions. Records shall be sufficiently current and accessible to relevant responsible people to support appropriate workload, withdrawal and return-to-activity decisions.

Indicators

- Preventive healthcare is current.
- Injuries and illnesses receive treatment.
- Medication is controlled.
- Chronic conditions influence workload.
- Health evidence supports fitness decisions.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes veterinary, dental, farriery and medication records.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where healthcare is substantially appropriate but isolated records or routine actions are incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where necessary veterinary treatment is withheld or significant health conditions are ignored to maintain service availability.

Criterion AM4-21 – Energy Use and Greenhouse Gas Performance

Material energy use and greenhouse gas emissions associated with therapy and care services shall be measured and managed proportionately to operational scale.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-21.1 Material energy sources shall be identified. Identification shall cover electricity, fuels, heating, transport and other significant sources directly attributable to the service where they are materially relevant.

AM4-21.2 Consumption shall be measured or reliably determined. The method used shall provide sufficiently reliable annual or activity-level information to support trend analysis, benchmarking and improvement decisions.

AM4-21.3 Material GHG emissions shall be quantified through applicable benchmarking methodology. Activity data, emission factors, boundaries and material assumptions shall be sufficiently traceable to support reproducible calculation and independent verification.

AM4-21.4 Reduction opportunities shall be evaluated without compromising beneficiary accessibility, horse welfare or essential service conditions. Options shall be considered in relation to operational need, technical feasibility and the interaction between efficiency, accessibility and horse-welfare requirements.

AM4-21.5 Performance shall be periodically reviewed. Review shall consider absolute consumption, relevant intensity indicators, abnormal variation and progress against established objectives or previous performance.

Indicators

- Material energy use is known.
- Quantitative information exists.
- Benchmarking captures relevant emissions.
- Reduction measures protect service quality and welfare.
- Trends are reviewed.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes utilities, fuels, benchmarking data and improvement evidence.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where measurement is substantially effective but individual data are incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where material performance information is systematically absent or deliberately misrepresented.

Criterion AM4-22 – Water, Wastewater and Resource Efficiency

Water shall be managed responsibly while maintaining horse care, hygiene, accessibility, and therapeutic requirements.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-22.1 Material water uses shall be identified. Identification shall include horse drinking, cleaning, hygiene, beneficiary facilities, outdoor activities and other significant uses relevant to the service.

AM4-22.2 Consumption shall be measured or reliably determined. Measurement or estimation shall be sufficiently reliable and repeatable to establish trends, investigate abnormal use and support applicable benchmarking reporting.

AM4-22.3 Efficiency opportunities shall be evaluated without compromising horse drinking water, hygiene or beneficiary needs. Measures shall prioritise addressing avoidable losses and inefficient practices rather than restricting essential provisions required for welfare, health, or service delivery.

AM4-22.4 Wastewater and contaminated runoff shall be appropriately controlled. Controls shall reflect the nature of contamination, drainage arrangements and applicable discharge requirements so that pollution risks are prevented or minimised.

AM4-22.5 Leaks, abnormal use and incidents shall be reviewed. Review shall determine probable causes, material consequences and corrective action where consumption or discharge differs significantly from expected performance.

Indicators

- Water uses are understood.
- Quantitative data exist.
- Efficiency does not compromise welfare.
- Pollution pathways are controlled.
- Abnormal use results in action.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes water records, facilities, drainage and benchmarking information.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where controls are generally effective but isolated measurement or maintenance deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where significant pollution or essential water provision is knowingly inadequately controlled.

Criterion AM4-23 – Waste, Manure and Circular Resource Management

Waste associated with horse care and therapy operations shall be prevented, segregated, recovered and disposed of responsibly.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-23.1 Material waste streams shall be identified. Identification shall include horse-related, beneficiary-related, clinical, hygiene, operational and other significant streams generated within the certification scope.

AM4-23.2 Manure, bedding, clinical or hygiene waste and general waste shall be appropriately segregated where relevant. Segregation arrangements shall reflect legal, hygiene, safety and recovery requirements and prevent avoidable mixing that reduces reuse or treatment options.

AM4-23.3 Quantities shall be measured or reliably estimated for significant streams where practicable. The methodology shall be sufficiently consistent to support annual comparison, material trend analysis and applicable SEI-Benchmarking-ORT reporting.

AM4-23.4 Reuse, recycling, composting and recovery opportunities shall be evaluated. Evaluation shall follow an appropriate resource hierarchy and consider technically and operationally practicable options before routine disposal.

AM4-23.5 Hazardous or healthcare-related waste shall be handled through appropriate routes. Storage, transfer, and disposal shall protect horses, beneficiaries, personnel, and the environment, and comply with applicable handling and contractor requirements.

Indicators

- Waste streams are known.
- Segregation is appropriate.
- Quantitative evidence is available.
- Circular options are considered.
- Special wastes are controlled.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes waste areas, records, contractors and benchmarking evidence.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where waste is substantially controlled but individual segregation or measurement weaknesses exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where waste management creates significant horse, human or environmental risk.

Criterion AM4-24 – Land, Nature and Therapeutic Environment

Outdoor environments used for therapy and care shall be managed to support horse welfare, beneficiary safety and environmental stewardship.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-24.1 Material land, habitat and environmental features shall be identified. Identification shall consider the areas used by horses and beneficiaries, environmentally sensitive features and any pathways through which activities may create material impact.

AM4-24.2 Therapeutic use of outdoor environments shall avoid unnecessary ecological degradation. Activity design and frequency shall take into account site conditions, seasonality, habitat sensitivity and the cumulative effects of repeated horse and human use.

AM4-24.3 Horse access shall be managed to reduce erosion, compaction and pollution where material. Controls shall be proportionate to soil, slope, weather, stocking or activity intensity and the proximity of watercourses or sensitive habitats.

AM4-24.4 Opportunities to support biodiversity, nature-positive management or environmental awareness through appropriate activities shall be considered where relevant and reasonably practicable. Consideration shall be proportionate to the service and shall not conflict with beneficiary needs, horse welfare, professional boundaries or the primary purpose of the activity.

AM4-24.5 Environmental conditions shall be periodically reviewed. Review shall identify material deterioration, emerging risks, and improvement opportunities, and shall inform necessary changes to access, maintenance, or activity management.

Indicators

- Outdoor areas are responsibly managed.
- Environmental degradation is controlled.
- Horse impacts are considered.
- Nature-positive opportunities are recognised.
- Condition is monitored.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes site inspection, land management and activity programmes.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where environmental management is generally responsible, but individual improvement opportunities remain.

Major non-conformity: Arises where operations knowingly cause significant unlawful or avoidable environmental degradation.

Criterion AM4-25 – Personnel Competence and Multidisciplinary Working

Persons involved in AM4 services shall possess competence appropriate to their assigned professional, equine, safeguarding and safety responsibilities.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-25.1 Competence requirements shall be defined by role. Requirements shall reflect the tasks, authority, beneficiary contact, horse contact and professional obligations associated with each role within the service.

AM4-25.2 Equine handlers shall demonstrate appropriate horse-handling and welfare competence. Competence shall include safe handling, recognition of relevant welfare indicators, and appropriate response when a horse's behaviour or condition changes.

AM4-25.3 Therapeutic or healthcare professionals shall possess the required professional competence. Qualifications, registration or other evidence shall correspond with the regulated or specialist services actually undertaken and remain current where required.

AM4-25.4 Volunteers and support personnel shall receive appropriate instruction and supervision. The level of instruction and supervision shall reflect assigned tasks, experience and the foreseeable risks to beneficiaries, horses and other people.

AM4-25.5 Multidisciplinary teams shall understand their respective responsibilities and communication requirements. Coordination shall ensure that role boundaries, information needs, escalation routes and responsibility for decisions are understood across the team.

Indicators

- Role competence is defined.
- Equine competence is demonstrated.
- Professional qualifications are appropriate.
- Volunteers are supervised.
- Teams coordinate effectively.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes qualifications, training, supervision, observation and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where competence is generally appropriate but isolated training or record deficiencies exist.

Major non-conformity: Arises where materially unqualified or unsupervised persons undertake activities creating significant horse or beneficiary risk.

Criterion AM4-26 – Workforce and Volunteer Wellbeing

The organisation shall manage employees, contractors and volunteers responsibly and recognise the emotional and physical demands associated with therapy and care services.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-26.1 Working arrangements shall comply with applicable employment and occupational requirements. Arrangements shall also consider working time, competence, supervision, and other conditions that may influence safe and responsible service delivery.

AM4-26.2 Physical risks associated with horse handling and beneficiary assistance shall be controlled. Controls shall address foreseeable risks of manual handling, movement, positioning, horse behaviour, and interaction associated with the assigned work.

AM4-26.3 Emotional demands associated with vulnerable beneficiaries or difficult cases shall be recognised where material. Where relevant, arrangements shall support appropriate supervision, debriefing or other proportionate measures to reduce avoidable adverse effects on personnel.

AM4-26.4 Volunteers shall not substitute for professional competence where specialist competence is required. Volunteer roles shall remain clearly bounded and supervised so that responsibility requiring regulated, specialist or professional judgement is not inappropriately delegated.

AM4-26.5 Staff concerns relating to horse or beneficiary welfare shall have an appropriate reporting route. Personnel shall be able to raise concerns without undue pressure to continue an activity when significant welfare, safety, or professional issues remain unresolved.

Indicators

- Workforce arrangements are responsible.
- Physical and emotional risks are considered.
- Volunteers operate within defined roles.
- Professional responsibilities are preserved.
- Welfare concerns can be raised.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes staffing arrangements, volunteer controls, risk assessments and interviews.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where workforce controls generally function, but individual arrangements require improvement.

Major non-conformity: Arises where unsafe, unlawful or materially inappropriate workforce practices create significant risk.

Criterion AM4-27 – Economic Responsibility and Service Resilience

Therapy and care services shall be economically managed so that financial pressure does not compromise horse welfare, beneficiary safety, professional competence or continuity of essential care.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-27.1 Material operating costs and resource requirements shall be understood. Understanding shall be sufficient to identify material dependencies that could affect continuity of horse care, professional provision, safety or service capacity.

AM4-27.2 Appropriate resources shall be maintained for horse care, competent personnel, veterinary support and safety. Resource decisions shall protect the minimum operational capability needed to deliver the service responsibly and respond to foreseeable welfare or emergency needs.

AM4-27.3 Horses shall not be overworked merely to maximise service revenue. Scheduling and utilisation decisions shall remain compatible with established horse workload, rest, recovery and continuing-suitability controls.

AM4-27.4 Beneficiary numbers shall remain compatible with available horses, facilities and competent personnel. Capacity decisions shall consider beneficiary needs, supervision, horse workload, professional coverage and the practical limitations of the operating environment.

AM4-27.5 Financial and demand trends shall inform capacity planning. Review shall identify emerging capacity or financial pressures early enough to support proportionate adjustment without transferring unacceptable impacts to horses or beneficiaries.

Indicators

- Operating requirements are understood.
- Essential welfare resources are protected.
- Revenue does not dictate horse workload.
- Beneficiary numbers reflect capacity.
- Financial trends inform planning.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes schedules, horse numbers, staffing, management planning and relevant financial evidence.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where economic management is generally responsible, but individual planning evidence is incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where financial decisions knowingly cause significant compromise of horse welfare, beneficiary safety or required professional provision.

Criterion AM4-28 – Outcome and Performance Measurement

The organisation shall measure material service, horse welfare, safety, environmental and operational performance using reliable information.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-28.1 Relevant performance indicators shall be identified. Indicators shall cover the material service, horse welfare, safety, environmental and operational outcomes necessary to understand performance and support improvement.

AM4-28.2 Appropriate service indicators may include sessions, beneficiaries, participation, completion, incidents and other relevant measures. Selected measures shall be sufficiently meaningful and consistent to support annual comparison, interpretation of activity scale and evaluation of significant trends.

AM4-28.3 Horse indicators shall include relevant workload, health, behavioural or welfare measures. The selected measures shall be appropriate to the service and capable of showing material changes in horse utilisation, condition, behaviour or welfare outcomes.

AM4-28.4 Material resource and environmental indicators shall link to applicable benchmarking reporting requirements. Performance data shall be traceable to reliable source information, and material estimates, conversions, normalisation methods and assumptions shall be identifiable and reproducible where applicable. Data quality and calculation methods shall remain consistent enough to permit comparison between reporting periods and independent verification of material results.

AM4-28.5 Outcome claims shall distinguish measured evidence from anecdotal observation. The organisation shall clearly differentiate objectively measured outcomes, professional interpretation, participant feedback and anecdotal information when communicating results.

Indicators

- Service activity is quantitatively understood.
- Horse workload and welfare are represented.
- Safety performance is monitored.
- Resource data link to benchmarking.
- Outcome evidence is appropriately characterised.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes performance records, horse data, incident reports, beneficiary programme information, and benchmarking evidence.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where performance is substantially measured, but individual indicators or analysis are incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where material performance is systematically unmeasured, deliberately misrepresented or therapeutic outcomes are knowingly presented as established evidence without appropriate basis.

Criterion AM4-29 – Corrective Action and Continual Improvement

The organisation shall use incidents, beneficiary feedback, horse-welfare observations, professional review and performance evidence to correct deficiencies and improve services.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-29.1 Significant incidents, welfare concerns, safeguarding concerns and service deficiencies shall be recorded. Records shall contain sufficient information to understand the nature and significance of the issue and to support proportionate follow-up where required.

AM4-29.2 Immediate action shall be taken where necessary to protect horses or beneficiaries. Protective action shall reflect the urgency and severity of the risk and shall not be delayed solely to preserve programme continuity or scheduling.

AM4-29.3 Significant or recurring problems shall be investigated to identify underlying causes. Investigation shall consider relevant operational, professional, human, equine and environmental factors rather than addressing only the immediate symptom.

AM4-29.4 Corrective actions shall have responsibilities and target dates. Actions shall be proportionate to the cause and significance of the issue and shall be assigned to people with appropriate authority to implement them.

AM4-29.5 Effectiveness shall be evaluated, and recurring problems shall trigger further review. Evaluation shall determine whether the action resolved the underlying issue; ineffective or repeated outcomes shall result in further analysis and revised controls.

Indicators

- Significant concerns are recorded.
- Immediate risks are controlled.
- Recurring issues receive cause analysis.
- Actions are assigned.
- Effectiveness is verified.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes incident records, complaints, welfare concerns, corrective actions and management review.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where corrective action generally functions, but individual cause analysis or follow-up is incomplete.

Major non-conformity: Arises where significant horse-welfare, safeguarding, clinical or safety deficiencies remain knowingly unresolved.

Criterion AM4-30 – Communication, Therapeutic Claims and Transparency

Communications concerning equine-assisted therapy, care services, horse wellbeing, beneficiary outcomes and sustainability shall be accurate, responsible and supported by appropriate evidence. Significant publicly relevant incidents shall be communicated factually and appropriately, without compromising beneficiary confidentiality, consent, safeguarding, dignity or professional obligations.

Compliance Requirements

AM4-30.1 Services shall be described accurately according to their actual professional and regulatory status, and therapeutic, health or psychological outcome claims shall be proportionate to the quality and strength of available evidence

AM4-30.2 Testimonials, individual experiences or beneficiary outcomes shall not be presented as equivalent to scientifically or clinically established evidence.

AM4-30.3 Images, testimonials and communications involving beneficiaries shall respect consent, privacy, confidentiality, safeguarding and dignity, with enhanced protection applied where vulnerable persons are involved.

AM4-30.4 Claims concerning horse wellbeing, sustainability and quantitative performance shall correspond with verified operational and applicable benchmarking evidence.

AM4-30.5 Significant incidents involving a horse, beneficiary or other person that become publicly relevant shall be communicated in accordance with CML-18 using appropriately verified information. Materially inaccurate or unsupported information shall be corrected without undue delay, while beneficiary medical, therapeutic and personal information shall remain subject to applicable consent, privacy, confidentiality and safeguarding controls.

Indicators

- Service terminology is accurate.
- Outcome claims are appropriately qualified.
- Anecdotal and scientific evidence are distinguished.
- Beneficiary privacy is protected.
- Significant incident communication is verified, confidentiality is protected and materially misleading information is corrected.

Verification and Non-Conformity Conditions

Verification includes websites, promotional materials, social media, testimonials, outcome reports, consent arrangements, horse-wellbeing and sustainability evidence and applicable benchmarking information. Where significant publicly relevant incidents have occurred, verification shall additionally include authorised communications, veterinary or other competent verification where relevant, subsequent factual updates and evidence that beneficiary privacy, consent, confidentiality, safeguarding and dignity were appropriately maintained.

Minor non-conformity: Arises where communications are substantially accurate and responsible but isolated information is outdated, imprecise, incompletely supported or an incident-related update is incomplete without creating a materially misleading representation or compromising beneficiary confidentiality.

Major non-conformity: Arises where therapeutic effectiveness, professional status, horse wellbeing, sustainability performance or significant incident information is deliberately or materially misrepresented, or where public communication concerning an incident results in a serious breach of beneficiary privacy, confidentiality, safeguarding or dignity.