

Quality Assurance

What is a Quality Assurance System?

Quality is about learning what you are doing well, but also identifying what you need to do better. It is essentially about seeking to achieve continuous improvement.

A Quality Assurance System uses quality as a way of reviewing performance against agreed standards. Systems are internally implemented which improve and maintain service delivery and which also respond to the needs of users.

How can a Quality assurance system help you?

Quality Assurance systems can help you to:

- Demonstrate the quality of service
- Identify what you are doing well.
- Identify what you do less well
- Show you how you can make improvements
- Help users know what services they can expect

What are the benefits of implementing a Quality Assurance System?

It can bring staff, volunteers and trustees together to work towards improvement.

It develops consistency across the organisation.

It demonstrates a level of credibility and quality of service to funders.

It can help with realistic planning and target setting.

Overall, implementing a Quality Assurance System can improve the performance, effectiveness and the quality of services provided by your organisation.

Different systems that are available:

There are several types of Quality System available; each is set up in their own way and has a different style and focus:

PQASSO:

PQASSO stands for Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations. It is an evidenced based system, which is self – assessed. It is based on the development of the whole organisation; it is divided into 12 areas with 3 levels of achievement.

For more information visit:

www.ces-vol.org.uk

Investors in People:

This standard aims to improve an organisation through the performance of its people. The focus is on ensuring that individual, team and organisational training and development support the organisation to meet its objectives.

There are ten indicators of good practice. Once organisations feel that they meet all the requirements they can apply to be certificated by external assessors. There are regular reviews, promoting continuous improvement.

For more information visit:

www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

EFQM Excellence Model:

The Excellence Model provides a framework for self-assessment and continuous improvement, this approach is not a quality system. This Model allows an organisation to address every aspect of its work. It has nine criteria covering both what you do and what you achieve. There is no cost other than buying the booklet.

For more information, visit:
http://www.bqf.org.uk/ex_description.htm

ISO 9000:

This group of standards aims to help organisations achieve user satisfaction by focusing on how things are done. The system looks at the processes an organisation uses to deliver its products, services and activities. A large number of approved certification bodies provide assessment and certification for a fee.

For more information, visit:
<http://www.iso.org/iso/home.htm>

Social auditing:

Social auditing, or social accounting, is a process that enables organisations to assess and demonstrate their social, economic and environmental impact. A standard, called the AA1000 Series, can be used to provide the basis for improving the sustainability performance of organisations.

For more information about how to carry out social auditing, visit:
<http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk/>

Community Legal Service Quality Mark:

This standard has been designed for organisations providing legal information and advice to the public. There are four different levels, ranging from simple self-help to those that carry out casework. Once you consider that you meet the

requirements of the chosen level, you apply for certification. There is no cost for this.

For more information, visit: http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/archive/archive_qm.asp

Charter Mark:

The Charter Mark is for organisations dealing with the public, including voluntary organisations that receive funding from the public sector. It is designed to help organisations improve their customer service and delivery to users; it checks that you are placing customers at the Centre of everything you do. There are six criteria that describe how to do this. It is run by the Cabinet Office, and assessed and certified by four approved bodies. There is a fee for external assessment.

For more information visit: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/chartermark/>

Quality First:

Quality First was designed by Birmingham Council for Voluntary Service for organisations with no paid staff. It contains a workbook that helps you carry out a self-assessment in nine quality areas.

For more information and to order a workbook, visit: <http://www.bvsc.org/>

Investing in Volunteers

Investing in Volunteers is the quality standard for organisations that involve volunteers. The standard covers ten indicators of best practice in volunteer management and provides both a tool to implement change and a means of evaluating and reviewing current practice. External assessment and certification is available for a fee.

For more information, visit:
<http://www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/>

The table below outlines the similarities and differences between the different quality systems. When you are choosing a system to use, it is important to consider:

- The size of your organisation.
- The cost of resources and time that are available.
- Is external accreditation necessary?

Details	PQASSO	Investors in people	EFQM Excellence Model	ISO 9000	Social Auditing	Quality Mark	Charter Mark
Size of organisation	All, but an emphasis on small to medium org's	All	All	All	All	All	All
Time needed	Flexible	6 months to 2 years	Flexible	12 - 18 months	Seek advice	Flexible	Flexible
Demand on staff time	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium - high	Medium
The need for external support	Workbook for doing it yourself	Guidance available to do it yourselves, but advisors are available	Yes	Yes	Guidance available to do it yourselves, but you can seek external support	Straight forward application form, but support is available	Guidance available to do it yourself
Level of training needed to use the system	Low	Medium	Medium - high	High	Medium	Low	Low
Complexity	Low	Low	Flexible	High	Flexible	Medium	Flexible
Relevance to the Voluntary sector	High	Medium	Low - medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Experience of use in the voluntary sector	High	High	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Possible to use in bite-size chunks	Yes	Yes, in terms of self assessment	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes, in terms of self assessment
Cost	Low	Medium – high	Medium - high	High	Medium	Very low	High

Focus on PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations)

PQASSO was developed in 1997 and is the only system developed by the voluntary sector, (the Charities Evaluation Services) for the voluntary sector.

It is an evidenced based system, which is self – assessed and it uses a work pack that is simple and straightforward to use.

It is divided into 12 different quality areas, which are focused on elements of organisational life:

- Planning For Quality
- Governance
- Management
- User Centred Service
- Staff and Volunteers
- Training and Development
- Managing Money
- Managing Resources
- Managing Activities
- Networking and Partnership
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Results

Each area has "suggested evidence" to help you identify how to demonstrate your achievements.

The self assessment process involves people in the organisation making judgement about the organisations performance by comparing it to the defined PQASSO standards and related indicators.

There are three "levels of achievement", with details of what the organisation should be doing to achieve each of these levels. All organisations do not

have to reach level three, level one may be the most appropriate for very small organisations.

PQASSO Quality Mark:

CES have recently developed a PQASSO Quality Mark, which is the new external assessment service for PQASSO users.

This has been introduced in a response to a request from users for an external kite mark. The Quality Mark is optional.

The self-assessment process is still vital to the PQASSO process.

For further information about PQASSO contact

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www.ces-vol.org.uk

① Extracts from this information sheet have been taken from: '**First steps in Quality**' by CES

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