Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations

Your local county voluntary council

2. Running your organisation

2.5 Quality

How is quality defined?

A quality organisation is an excellent organisation with excellent staff and/or volunteers providing excellent services within an organisation that has excellent internal systems and processes.

Quality is about the degree to which a product, service or process meets or exceeds the requirements which have been agreed with stakeholders. Quality is about excellence in the way that an organisation is run, in service-delivery and about achieving the very best results.

The Charities Evaluation Service sums up this idea of quality in a few statements:

- Knowing what you want to do and how to do it.
- Learning from what you do.
- Using what you learn to develop your organisation and its services.
- Achieving what you set out to do.
- Satisfying your stakeholders.

Quality is about an organisation doing its best possible work and providing its best possible service.

To achieve this means finding out what you are doing well and keeping it that way and what you need to change in order to do better. Introducing a quality system is a systematic way of doing the above

What does quality mean in my organisation?

Quality means that the organisation:

- Strives for continuous improvement in all that it does.
- Uses recognised standards or models as a means to continuous improvement and not as an end.
- Agrees requirements with stakeholders, and endeavours to meet or exceed these first time and every time.
- Promotes equality of opportunity through its internal and external conduct.
- Is accountable to stakeholders.
- Adds value to its end users and beneficiaries.

What is a Quality System?

Simply, a Quality System is a tool to improve your organisation. How does the tool work? By guiding you through a process of looking at different aspects of your organisation, agree on what you're doing well, make plans for what you need to improve on, implement those plans and then review.
There are lots of different quality systems in existence. Although they have differing characteristics, the way they all work is much the same.

Each has a set of defined standards. You assess your organisation against these standards, evidence what you are already achieving, plan for what you need to improve, implement these plans and evidence your achievements and review your organisation against the standards.

A typical quality cycle would follow this

- agree standards
- assess and evidence
- identify improvements
- implement plans and evidence
- review

Benefits for voluntary organisations

- strengthened stability of organisation
- increased staff satisfaction and commitment
- increased legitimacy
- satisfied funders requirements
- more able to stand back from day-to-day services, see the bigger picture, think, plan and review.
- strengthened organisations infrastructure
- improved service-delivery
- more responsive to service-users

Choosing a Quality System

Quality systems can be divided into 4 categories, off-the-shelf, in-house, sub-sectoral, multiple system.

1. Off-the-shelf

PQASSO, Quality First, EFQM Excellence Model, Investors in People, Quality Mark, Charter Mark, VISIBLE, ISO 9001

Benefits of off-the-shelf systems are their national recognition, also many have a lot of prestige attached to them. If funders require you to implement a system, it is likely to be one of the above. It is easier to learn from and with other organisations, and many

of them are relatively cheap to implement, especially if they are self-assessment models. They are tried and tested, some have been developed specifically for the voluntary sector

PQASSO (A Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations)

For small to medium sized voluntary and community organisations, or for projects within larger organisations, PQASSO seeks to provide a system for you to assess and improve all aspects of your work. Designed as a work pack, PQASSO has 12 quality areas, including *User centred service, Staffing and volunteers, Governance* and *Networking and Partnerships.* It is designed as a self-assessment model but Charities Evaluation Services, which produces the system, are considering whether external assessment should be offered.

Investors in People (IIP)

This standard, developed by IIP UK, aims to improve an organisation through the performance if its people. The focus is on ensuring individual, team and organisational training and development help the organisation to meet its objectives. The standard is externally assessed and there are regular reviews, promoting continuous improvement.

EFQM Excellence Model

Designed as an overarching, self-assessment framework for continuous improvement, this approach is not a quality system. The Excellence Model allows your organisation to address every aspect of its work in a planned way. You can use it to assess current performance, identify opportunities for improvement, measure these improvements and compare your organisation with others. You can aim for the UK Quality Award by undergoing external assessment.

ISO 9000

A group of standards that aim to help organisations achieve customer satisfaction by focusing on how things are done. The system looks at the processes an organisation uses to deliver its products, services and activities.

Community Legal Service Quality Mark (England and Wales)

This standard has been specifically designed for organisations providing legal information and advice to the public. The Quality Mark has different levels to choose from depending on the information, advice and help offered by your organisation, e.g. General help, Casework, Specialist help, etc. You apply for the Quality Mark at the level that best suits your service and your application is reviewed by an auditor.

Customer Service Excellence (CSE)

A system for organisations dealing with the public. This includes many voluntary organisations that receive their funding from the public sector. This system looks at the quality of service delivery, checking that you are placing customers at the centre of everything you do. The standard is externally assessed and re-assessment is every 3 years. Applicants are encouraged to network with others working to achieve the award through quality networks and events around the UK.

Occupational standards

A group of standards that focus on how well people perform their jobs. Areas covered include management, care, housing, administration, counselling, etc. They are nationally recognised standards and can be used by an organisation in many areas of people management. You can use them to design job descriptions, provide supervision and feedback on performance and identify training needs. In addition, they are the foundation of NVQs, National Vocational Qualifications.

2. In-house

Some organisations choose to develop their own Quality System. Examples of these in Wales are Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil and Opportunity Housing Trust. Also organisations such as Crisis, Age Concern, Macmillan Cancer Trust, Citizens Advice have developed their own Quality Assurance System. Benefits of developing your own system are that it will be completely relevant to your organisation and be developed around your aims and values. A problem may be that a funder requires you to implement an additional external system. In house systems could also be expensive and take a long time to develop.

3. Sub-sectoral

These are systems that have been developed specifically for a particular field of work (eg drug and alcohol, young people).
As with an in-house system, they are generally thought to fit very well with an organisations work. They are also off-the-shelf systems and so have all the same benefits. If you are a member of an umbrella body, it might be a condition of membership or condition of funding. It’s common for a sub-sectoral system to be used alongside other quality systems.

4. Multiple Systems

This is when organisations use a mixture of different systems, sometimes by choice, sometimes by default, sometimes because they already have their own and then are required by funders to use another one. In theory, you can mix and match different parts of different systems, take the bits of different systems to make it more relevant, but there is a danger of inconsistency and may be more burdensome than just using one.

Investing in Volunteers

Investing in Volunteers is the new UK quality standard for volunteer management. If your organisation involves volunteers, achieving the *Investing in Volunteers* standard will enable your organisation to make the best use of this valuable people resource.

The standard comprises of 10 Indicators of volunteer management best practice, supported by 55 practices, based on four key areas of volunteer management:

- planning for volunteer involvement
- recruiting volunteers
- selecting and matching volunteers
- supporting and retaining volunteers

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) is managing *Investing in Volunteers* in Wales. The standards, assessment, and accreditation are the same for every organisation using *Investing in Volunteers*, wherever they are in the UK.

VISIBLE Communities™

This standard developed by Community Matters is based around the principle that it is vital for a community association, network or other similar multi-purpose community centre/organisation to achieve high standards around their work to help ensure the future sustainability of community based services.
The VISIBLE Communities™ framework identifies the role of community associations (and similar) as:

A **V**oice to represent issues of local concern.
An **I**ndependent and politically neutral organisation.
A **S**ervice provider for local people.
An **I**nitiator of projects to meet locally identified need.
A **B**uilder of partnerships with other local organisations and groups.
A strong **L**ocal network of people and organisations.
A way to **E**ngage local people to become active in their communities.

Becoming Visible – Operating Standards for Community Organisations is a workbook and development tool that will enable local organisations to become VISIBLE. It has received endorsement from the Local Government Association, The Active Communities Unit of the Home Office and the Charity Commission.

Other standards

FAM (Function Activity Model, regarding retention of records)

Created by Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), the Function Activity Model (FAM) study was based on the principles of best international practice for records keeping now codified as ISO 15489.

Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the effective management of record retention by all public authorities. A carefully considered and regularly reviewed records retention policy is an essential part of an institutions records management system and this Function and Activity Model represents the first step towards achieving just such a policy.

“Two Ticks” Disability Quality Mark

The Disability Symbol is a recognition given by Jobcentre Plus to employers based in Great Britain who have agreed to take action to meet five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees.

Matrix

The Matrix Standard is the unique quality framework for the effective delivery of information, advice and/or guidance on learning and work. The Matrix Standard is useful for organisations that deliver information, advice and/or guidance to external clients as part of their business and also for employers who are committed to developing their people.

Further information

British Quality Foundation (Excellence Model)
32-34 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2QX
Tel: 020 7654 5000
www.quality-foundation.co.uk

Charities Evaluation Services (PQASSO)
4 Coldbath Square, London EC1R 5HL
Tel: 020 7713 5722
www.ces-vol.org.uk

Customer Service Excellence
Tel: 01925 256650
www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com

Investors in People UK
UK CES. 28-30 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0TT
Tel: 01709 774800
www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

Legal Services Commission (Quality Mark)
85 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8TX
Tel: 0300 200 20 20
www.legalservices.gov.uk

Wales Quality Centre (Investors in Excellence)
Waterton Centre, Waterton Industrial Estate, Bridgend CF31 3WT
Tel: 01656 652063
www.walesqualitycentre.org.uk

Wales Council for Voluntary Action
(Investing in Volunteers)
Tel: 0800 2888 329
www.wcva.org.uk

Community Matters
(Visible Communities)
Tel: 0845 8474253
www.visiblecommunities.org.uk

FAM
www.jisc.ac.uk

"Two Ticks" Disability Quality Mark
www.businesslink.gov.uk

Matrix
www.matrixstandard.com

Disclaimer
The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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