

Culpeper Community Garden



About the organisation

Culpeper Community Garden, a registered charity with two part-time employees, is an award winning public open space in the heart of Islington, London. In 1982 permission was given to two local schools to transform a triangle of wasteland into a small temporary garden. Local people also got involved and helped develop the site into a beautiful public space. It continues to be managed for and by local people and is a unique project where people from all walks of life come together on a genuinely equal footing to appreciate and enhance their environment.

Why PQASSO?

We knew that we needed to give our organisational systems a thorough review and PQASSO was recommended to us by Voluntary Action Islington as being an appropriate system to use.

How did you implement it?

One staff member and one trustee took the lead and we received regular support from Voluntary Action Islington throughout. We broke the whole process down into easy stages and involved people at all levels. Committee members were involved in writing and reviewing policies and our part-time staff took on elements of the preparation process.

Why did you decide to go for the PQASSO Quality Mark?

We were aware that achieving a quality mark would help with our fundraising. We had already completed a level one self-assessment approximately two years before going for the PQASSO Quality Mark so felt confident about an external assessment.

Your experience of the assessment process

The assessment process was divided into stages which helped to spread the work around all the normal functions of the organisation.

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What were the benefits of achieving the PQASSO Quality Mark?

It is great to have an organisation in which you know that all your policies and procedures are in place and up to date. There are clear structures both for day to day operation and also should things go wrong. Feedback from funders is positive - we get the impression they are suitably impressed that we have achieved this award.

Practical Tips

- ✓ Get a team together with one or two determined leaders.
- ✓ Use any external support available.
- ✓ Don't reinvent the wheel – use and adapt model policies.
- ✓ Set a time frame early on and make sure you keep to it.
- ✓ Don't feel overwhelmed by the process and hold onto the fact that you will have a healthier organisation at the end of the process.
- ✓ Engage all of the team and ensure that the work doesn't fall to one or two people.