



helping you do better what you do best

first steps in quality

first steps in quality

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) has worked since 1990 with a wide variety of voluntary organisations and their funders, providing training, advice and consultancy support to promote quality and accessible monitoring and evaluation practice.

If you have any queries about implementing quality, you can get free advice from CES.

Phone 020 7713 5722 or email enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk

Details of CES training are provided on page 33.

First steps in quality

First edition, October 2002

Second edition, 2010

© Charities Evaluation Services, 2010

ISBN 978-0-9558849-4-8

First edition written by Eileen Murphy with Jean Ellis for Charities Evaluation Services. Revised and updated by Louise Smith with Sam Matthews for Charities Evaluation Services.

Designed by Alexander Boxill.

Revised by Positive2.

Printed by Datum.

Copyright

Unless otherwise indicated, no part of this publication may be stored in a retrievable system or reproduced in any form whatsoever without prior written permission by Charities Evaluation Services.

acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Active Community Unit of the Home Office, the Baring Foundation, the City Parochial Foundation and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for their support for the first edition of this publication.

We would also like to thank the following individuals:

For commenting on the text of the second edition:

Eleanor Beardsley, CES staff member

Jean Ellis, CES staff member.

For production management:

Deborah Smith.

inside this booklet

Introduction	2	Understanding quality management	4
		What does quality mean?	4
This booklet	3	What is a quality management system?	4
		Why does quality improvement matter?	5
		What are the benefits of managing quality?	6
		Quality improvement in the voluntary and community sector	7
		Values	8
		Quality and evaluation	8
		Quality and outcomes	8
		Getting ready to improve quality	9
		What are you trying to achieve?	9
		Is your organisation ready?	10
		What quality approach do you need?	10
		What quality approaches are available?	12
		What support can you get?	14
		How much will it cost?	14
		Getting started with quality improvement	18
		Planning	18
		Roles and responsibilities	18
		Self-assessment	19
		Quality action plans	20
		Telling others about your achievements	22
		External assessment and accreditation	22
		Continuous improvement	23
		The continuous improvement cycle	23
		Establishing a quality culture	24
		Top tips	25
		Table 1: The scope of each approach to quality	27
		Table 2: Choosing between different approaches to quality	28
		Glossary	30
		Where to go for more information	31
		Parent bodies for quality approaches described in this booklet	31
		Other useful contacts	32

introduction

The voluntary and community sector is complex and diverse, and is affected by changing demands from those in whose interests it works, from funders and commissioners, and from society as a whole.

A significant amount of the sector's income comes in the form of contracts and other funding from government sources, both national and local. The sector is also dependent on funding from charitable trusts and foundations, particularly for new initiatives, as well as on donations from service users and the general public.

This funding makes organisations more formally accountable. Voluntary and community organisations are more likely to have to prove to funders and regulators that their performance and management are of a high quality and that they are providing a public benefit. They may also have to show how quality can be guaranteed, and how they perform in comparison to others. Service users and the general public also expect high standards and quality services.

Organisations themselves want to show that they are working to high standards, and there is more and more demand for guidance on how to improve what they are doing.

this booklet

First steps in quality is written for individuals and organisations who are new or fairly new to quality.

It is for Board members, staff and volunteers in small and medium-sized voluntary and community organisations who want to find out more about quality and the different quality approaches available.

This booklet uses everyday language and gives you an introduction to quality and to the possible benefits of using a quality management system. It will help you start thinking about standards best suited to your needs and circumstances and those of your users.

The booklet offers guidance on the following:

- **what quality improvement means**
- **why managing quality matters to voluntary and community organisations**
- **what quality systems are available**
- **how to choose the right approach**
- **how to get started**
- **further help and information.**

understanding quality management

What does quality mean?

The term 'quality' is often used in a general, non-technical way. If someone talks about 'improving quality', they may simply mean activities designed to improve the organisation and its services.

Improving quality is essentially about learning about what you are doing well and doing it better. It also means finding out what you may need to change or improve to make sure you meet the needs of your users. It can be about seeking to become an excellent organisation. A high-quality organisation:

- is clear about what it wants to achieve
- knows how best to do it
- does what it says it will do
- learns from what it does
- uses the learning to develop the organisation and its services
- makes a positive difference for users
- satisfies users and other stakeholders – those different people and groups with an interest in the organisation.

You are likely to find that your organisation may have already developed some elements of a quality initiative.

What is a quality management system?

Organisations need to manage quality in a comprehensive and systematic way. This process of formal management is called a 'quality management system' – often shortened to 'quality system'.

Your quality management system is made up of all the elements of organisational life that relate to how your organisation is run and the quality of your work. It is likely to include, for example, governance, managing people and resources and how you deliver services.

These are the stages that you should follow:

- **Agree on standards.** These concern the performance that everyone expects from the organisation.

- **Carry out a self-assessment.** This means that you compare how well you are doing against these expectations.
- **Set priorities.** Decide what you most need to improve or develop so that you can meet expectations.
- **Draw up an action plan.** This will include what needs to be done, who will do it, how it will be done, and when.
- **Implement.** Do the work.
- **Review.** At this stage you will check what changes have been made and whether they have made a difference.
- **Tell people about it.** Talk about your work on improving quality in publicity material, funding bids and reports. To get more recognition for your work on quality, you may also want to apply for an external quality mark or 'accreditation'.

There is information on different quality systems on page 12: **What quality approaches are available?**

Why does quality improvement matter?

Voluntary and community organisations want to provide the best possible service for their users and to show that they are working to high standards. They are also accountable to their regulators, funders, commissioners and the general public. As voluntary and community organisations work more and more with public and private sector organisations, there is also external pressure to show that they provide quality services and manage their organisations efficiently and effectively.

These are some of the demands on voluntary and community organisations. They may need to show that:

- they are meeting the needs and demands of their users, and that users are satisfied
- they are providing users and funders with efficient, consistent services
- they can do what they have said they will do, within an agreed budget
- they are producing positive outcomes for their users
- they are having a positive effect or 'impact' on the local community or on society generally

- they are not likely to cause harm to people, get a bad reputation or close down
- they are meeting regulators' requirements.

Introducing a quality system will take commitment, planning and some investment of resources, but it should help you to face these demands. Some organisations are also facing increasing competition from other organisations offering similar services. This may be competition for funding, for clients, or for Board members, staff or volunteers. Attention to quality is an important way that an organisation can prepare to meet competition.

What are the benefits of managing quality?

Quality standards will cover a range of different aspects of an organisation and its management. This is illustrated in Table 1: *The scope of each approach to quality* on page 27. However, whichever standards you use, you should find that you:

- gain a better understanding of what is working well and what is not
- can decide more easily where to put resources to make improvements
- strengthen your organisation and its services
- improve your funding applications, reports and publicity materials.

Participants in research done in 2004¹ on the use of quality systems in the voluntary sector said:

We have had a chance to reflect on performance, highlight areas where improvements were needed and work on them.

Everyone, including the trustees, felt involved and their commitment has been strengthened.

It has given us a very good reputation in the sector and improved our relationship with partner organisations.

¹ Centre for Voluntary Action Research (2004) *The Adoption and Use of Quality Systems in the Voluntary Sector: Research Report*, National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Charities Evaluation Services, London.

Quality improvement in the voluntary and community sector

A number of developments in the sector over recent years have increased the demand for information on managing quality. These are some of them:

- The Charities Act 2006 requires charities to demonstrate public benefit.
- The Charity Commission has updated its guidance, *Hallmarks of an Effective Charity*² as part of its role in promoting high standards and building public confidence, and formally approves or 'endorses' quality systems which meet these principles.
- Charities Evaluation Services (CES) and other organisations working in the sector have championed the use of quality systems, and offer training and support for organisations using them.
- There is increasing use of quality systems across the sector, particularly PQASSO.
- Many voluntary and community sector organisations provide services which are regulated by statutory regulators such as Ofsted or the Care Quality Commission, which set their own quality standards.
- More and more funders are interested in the quality of the organisations they fund or offer contracts to. They are increasingly likely to ask organisations to:
 - describe their approaches to quality management to establish their eligibility for funding
 - introduce a quality system
 - provide evidence of quality through regular monitoring reports or external accreditation.

There is information about accreditation on page 22: **External assessment and accreditation.**

² Charity Commission (2008) *CC10 The Hallmarks of an Effective Charity*, www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Values

Many voluntary organisations have particular values that are an essential part of their identity. These values may be about, for example, equality and diversity, environmental issues, community impact, or about ways of working. A quality system should state clearly the values on which it is based, and these should fit closely with the organisation's own values and support them.

Quality and evaluation

A quality management system will need substantial evidence about what the organisation is doing, how it is doing it, and its results. A good monitoring and evaluation system will help to give you the information you need.

Although monitoring and evaluation may have other purposes, they can serve as important tools for improving quality. Work on quality and evaluation should be co-ordinated and they should feed into each other. However, it is useful to recognise that they are two different things.³

Quality and outcomes

Organisations and their funders are placing increasing emphasis, not only on what organisations do, and how they do it, but on understanding and assessing the outcomes of what they do. Outcomes are the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of services and activities provided by an organisation. Some, but not all, quality systems have standards that require information on how well outcomes have been achieved. Assessing the outcomes of your work as an integral part of quality management can play an important role in improving your organisation's performance.

³ For more information, see Charities Evaluation Services (2002) *First steps in monitoring and evaluation*, London.

getting ready to improve quality

Before you get started with managing and improving quality, it will be useful to go through the steps described in this section. These steps will help you make the right choice of quality approach and help to avoid any false starts. First, take time to discuss these questions:

- What are you trying to achieve by implementing a quality system?
- Is the organisation ready to start implementing a system?
- What quality system will be most appropriate?

What are you trying to achieve?

Stakeholders may have different priorities for managing quality, so it is important to hear their views. These are some of the aims you may have in implementing a system:

You may want to:

- have a system for assuring the quality of all aspects of the organisation
- improve particular aspects of the organisation
- improve the quality of your services to your users
- improve the outcomes of your services
- bring people together to share their ideas for improvement
- motivate people
- attract more users, Board members or volunteers
- show stakeholders, such as funders, how well you are performing
- fulfil membership criteria of umbrella or membership bodies about quality
- go on improving over time
- gain external accreditation.

Is your organisation ready?

Here are some questions that it would be useful to think about carefully with Board members and staff:

- Do all the relevant people understand what will be involved in introducing a quality system?
- Are people committed to introducing a quality system, particularly Board members and managers?
- Have resources been set aside for the work involved?
- Is this the right time or are there other priorities or difficulties?

Asking these questions and making sure there are no management or other problems that might set you back is called a 'readiness audit'. It is important you do this, or you may find that the energy and resources needed to manage quality are absorbed by other issues.

What quality approach do you need?

A first step is to find out if you are required to use a particular system, either by your funders, or by a membership organisation to which you belong or want to belong.

In most cases, however, the approach you choose will depend on the nature of your organisation and what you hope to achieve. Some approaches are presented as a set of standards. Different standards have different characteristics, make different demands on your resources, and will produce different benefits.

These are some of the main differences between the various approaches:

Standards may be 'off-the-shelf' or 'in-house'. There is a wide range of off-the-shelf standards, which have a major advantage of reflecting agreed good practice and may be widely recognised and valued. Although in-house standards are tailor-made to your particular requirements, developing them can be complex and time consuming, and they may not be recognised by people outside your organisation. Some organisations use an off-the-shelf system and develop some additional standards to address their particular activities or concerns.

Standards may be specific to your particular services, or may apply more generally to different fields of work. If your main aim is to improve your services, you may want to choose standards focused on the particular services you provide. For example, there are off-the-shelf standards designed specifically for organisations working with alcohol and drugs, supported housing or refugees.

Standards focus in different ways. Some systems cover all aspects of running an organisation; others focus on particular aspects, such as users, fundraising or staff development. Some focus on management processes and some on customer care.

Quality systems may be based on self-assessment or on external assessment, or they may combine both. Systems based on self-assessment can bring a shared organisational commitment to quality improvement and other benefits. On the other hand, external assessment and accreditation can carry more weight with funders and other external stakeholders. Quality systems with both options can give you the best of both worlds.

There is more information about self-assessment on page 19: **Self-assessment.**

There are other differences between standards. These include how easy or complex they are to use, whether external support or training is necessary, whether they define more than one level of achievement, and what resources they need.

When you choose between different standards, consider how well they 'fit' with your organisation:

- Do they address the areas you want to prioritise?
- How easy will they be to implement?
- Will they bring about the changes and recognition you need?
- Do they offer a gradual and steady approach to making improvements?
- Do you want an external assessment option?
- How costly will they be to implement?

On the following pages we describe some of the off-the-shelf standards most commonly used by voluntary and community organisations. Table 2 on pages 28 and 29 summarises some of the main characteristics of these approaches so that you can readily compare one with another.

What quality approaches are available?

Collect as much information as you can about different options before making a decision. Here is a list of the main off-the-shelf quality approaches available and being used by voluntary and community organisations across the UK.

PQASSO

PQASSO was developed specifically for voluntary and community organisations by CES and is the most widely used system in the sector. A third edition was published in 2008. PQASSO is a user-friendly system, allowing you to assess and improve all aspects of your work. Designed as a workpack, PQASSO has 12 quality areas, including *User-centred service*, *Managing people*, *Governance* and *Results*, and three levels of achievement. Support is available from CES and also through a network of local CES-licensed PQASSO mentors. PQASSO is designed as a self-assessment model, and external accreditation (the PQASSO Quality Mark) is now available against all three levels. The Charity Commission has formally endorsed PQASSO Levels 2 and 3.

Customer Service Excellence

This is the UK government's national standard for excellence in customer service. It was originally designed for public sector organisations, but has now been adapted for use across all sectors. It looks at the quality of service delivery, checking that you are placing customers at the centre of everything you do. There is an online self-assessment tool, and external assessment is available through licensed assessment bodies.

EFQM Excellence Model

Designed as an over-arching, self-assessment framework for continuous improvement, this approach is often used by organisations which already have some experience in working with quality. The EFQM Excellence Model allows an 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 those improvements and compare your organisation with others. The model now offers a staged approach to external accreditation. At the top level, some organisations aim for the competitive UK Quality Awards.

Investors in People (IiP)

This system 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. External assessment is available and there are regular reviews, promoting continuous improvement. This system does not address all aspects of an organisation. Instead, it has a particular focus on managing and supporting staff.

Investing in Volunteers

This system focuses on the recruitment, induction and management of volunteers. External assessment is available, and support is built into the process, including an introductory workshop, feedback on self-assessment, and optional e-learning programmes.

ISO 9001

This is an international standard which gives the requirements for quality management systems. ISO 9001 aims to help organisations achieve customer satisfaction by focusing on how things are done, looking at the processes an organisation uses to deliver its products, services and activities. It is externally assessed, with twice-yearly audits of continued compliance with the standard.

Quality First

This is a system written for the very smallest organisations with no paid staff. It aims to cover all the essential aspects of running a small voluntary organisation, and offers two levels of achievement. It can form the basis for moving on to more formalised systems. External assessment is not available.

VISIBLE

This system is particularly relevant to the needs of community organisations. It has seven sections based on the seven letters of the name, including *Voice*, *Independent* and *Service*. A range of resources is available to support organisations to meet the standards, including online guidance and self-assessment tools, a telephone advice line, and a network of local agents. External assessment is also available.

Some of these quality systems can complement each other. You may wish to use more than one set of standards. For example, some organisations use PQASSO and have also sought Investors in People accreditation. However, be careful not to take on too much at any one time.

Table 2 on pages 28 and 29, **Choosing different approaches to quality**, will tell you more about the different quality standards and help you choose between them.

What support can you get?

The level and type of external support you may need will depend on the size and type of your organisation and the skills and experience you have internally. It will also depend on the quality system you choose, and the guidance that comes with the system.

Support can be helpful in a number of ways. For example, it can:

- help you interpret and understand the standards themselves
- help you plan the process of introducing and implementing your quality system and its key stages
- stimulate healthy debate and discussion
- facilitate or guide self-assessment
- provide advice on progress and readiness for external assessment.

Think about how you could benefit from external training together with people from other organisations working on quality, or from in-house training designed specifically for you, or from consultancy. You could choose a mixture of these. Remember also the value of networking with others.

You will find details of organisations that can tell you more about training and support at the back of this booklet: **Where to go for more information.**

How much will it cost?

It will be difficult for staff to achieve the standards set by a quality system unless they have the necessary resources. Each approach to quality described has different costs. It is important to find out this information when you collect details about the different standards, and to draw up a likely budget. These are the costs that may be involved:

- purchase of the standards
- cost of guidance material
- costs of training or external support
- costs of staff time for self-assessment
- cover for routine work tasks

- costs involved in making quality improvements
- fees for external assessment and accreditation
- other hidden costs.

The main cost will be that of Board member, staff and volunteer time. A large organisation may decide to pay for extra staff time to co-ordinate work on improving quality. If your organisation is widely spread across a number of units or geographically, or is distant from sources of support, this may add to the cost.

In the long term, quality improvement should make your organisation more cost-effective. In the short term, however, you need to identify how you will cover the costs of your work on quality. Talk to your funders about including an appropriate proportion of your costs in your funding bids for particular projects or services – they may be willing to support you, especially if they expect you to have a system in place. You may also find that funding is available to support quality initiatives in your area or field of work. We suggest that you check the websites and contacts listed on pages 31 and 32.

Here is a summary of the steps you should follow in getting ready for quality.

Steps	What is involved
<p>Step 1 Consider what your organisation is trying to achieve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discuss what quality means to you at management meetings. ■ Consult with Board members, staff, volunteers and, where appropriate, service users. ■ Agree the importance of quality, and what it means, with your funders. ■ Agree the benefits you are looking for.
<p>Step 2 Assess your organisation's situation and circumstances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Talk with the Board and the management team about the organisation's readiness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are you going through major change? – Are there other priorities, or difficulties? – Is this a good time to begin a quality initiative? ■ What will you need to do to make quality improvement work?
<p>Step 3 Think about what sort of standards may help you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check if your funders or your membership organisation require you to use particular standards. ■ Think about what standards will best meet your organisation's needs.

<p>Step 4 Find out as much as possible about different approaches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Look at websites and contact providers. ■ Where possible, talk to other similar organisations using quality standards.
<p>Step 5 Identify any external support available to you and how you can best use it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check what is available online. ■ Identify support agencies (local, regional and national) and find out what they have to offer. ■ Decide whether you have any training needs. ■ Consider how you might network with other organisations also introducing quality standards.
<p>Step 6 Estimate how much will it cost.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Draw up a budget to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – buying the standards – costs of training and external support – costs of making changes – external accreditation (if required). ■ Decide how best to cover your costs. Can you include some of the costs in funding bids?

getting started with quality improvement

Planning

Before you get started with improving quality, it is important to plan your quality work. Here are some of the main things you will need to plan for:

- people's roles and responsibilities
- introductory and progress meetings
- training and possible external help
- the stages of self-assessment, including collecting the information, bringing it together and reporting back
- a timetable for implementing change
- a review of your action plans
- external accreditation.

Roles and responsibilities

It is helpful to identify one person or a small team to have a co-ordinating role. This will help keep the process on track. However, everyone in the organisation has a role in implementing quality. The extent to which they are involved will depend on the type of organisation.

Board members

Board members have an essential role in championing quality. They need to be committed, take a lead, and provide support when quality management is being introduced. Unless they do this, plans to have an effective quality system are likely to fall down.

Board members should also be involved in examining and reviewing their own practices. This means looking at the performance of the Board and how they provide good governance of the organisation.

Managers

It is important that your organisation's senior managers also provide leadership, driving the quality process forward. If you don't have any paid staff, the Board should be providing this leadership role.

Managers need to actively encourage the commitment of everyone involved. This will be helped if they keep people informed and involved, talking to people directly where possible. They should also keep the organisation on track to meet implementation plans.

Staff and volunteers

Consulting and communicating well with staff and volunteers will make a big difference to the success of your quality initiative. It will be easier to make changes if:

- people know what is happening and why
- people have a chance to express their views and contribute ideas.

Users

Wherever possible it is helpful to consult and involve users in implementing a quality system. How you involve them will depend on what type of organisation you are and what you do. They can have a vital role in:

- assessing the quality of your services
- giving feedback on the results of changes and improvements.

Self-assessment

Whatever standards you choose, your next step will be to find out how your organisation measures up against the quality standards you have chosen. When you carry out a full review of your organisation, what it does and how it does it, using your own people, this is known as self-assessment. It is helpful to involve Board members, staff, volunteers, and users in this process. Self-assessment is particularly good at bringing people together to share different perspectives and ideas and can be very motivating.

Just going through the self-assessment will help you learn about your organisation and how it works. You will identify things you do well, as well as areas for improvement. By involving people in this process, you are likely to get benefits of better communication, a flow of ideas and more motivation.

Don't be downhearted if you find lots of areas for improvement when you do your self-assessment. This may simply mean that you've been very thorough! You do need to prioritise the important areas to be addressed first – don't try to do everything at once. To help you prioritise, ask these questions about the suggested improvement:

- Is it important for your organisation's survival?
- Will it improve things for your users?
- Does it need to be done now or can it wait?
- Have you got the resources to do it?
- Would it be easy to do?
- Would it be risky not to do it?

Quality action plans

Once you have done your self-assessment and agreed priorities, the next step is to develop a plan of how to make the quality improvements that you have identified. You can go back to this plan at agreed review dates to check if actions have been carried out.

Your action plans will help you keep quality improvements on the agenda and to review that they are being implemented to an agreed timescale.

Self-assessment and action planning are not 'one-offs', but something you do regularly, possibly every six months. You can then include the actions you decide on as a result of your self-assessment in your annual plans. For example, you may discover that you don't collect enough information about the views of your users. As a result, you might plan how to improve this in the coming year. In time, you will find it useful to integrate quality plans into the organisation's business and year plans.

Here is an action planning pro forma that may help you.

Action	By when?	By whom?
What is the specific change, improvement or new development that you are going to make in your organisation?	You may want to say when each of the stages of the action will happen.	You may want to list everyone who will be involved in the action and what they will do.

Resources needed:

Review date for the action plan:

Action plan approved by:

Date action plan agreed:

Telling others about your achievements

Tell people about your approach to quality, the good practices you have identified and the improvements you have made. You can do this in funding bids and reports to funders, reports to your Board, and in publicity materials for service users, potential service users and the wider public. To gain further recognition for what you have achieved, you may decide to apply for external accreditation.

External assessment and accreditation

External accreditation is when you get a seal of approval from an outside body for achieving the standards. A person or team from another agency assesses your organisation, what it does and how it does it, to find out how you measure up against the quality standards. You will have carried out your own self-assessment and made necessary improvements before this happens.

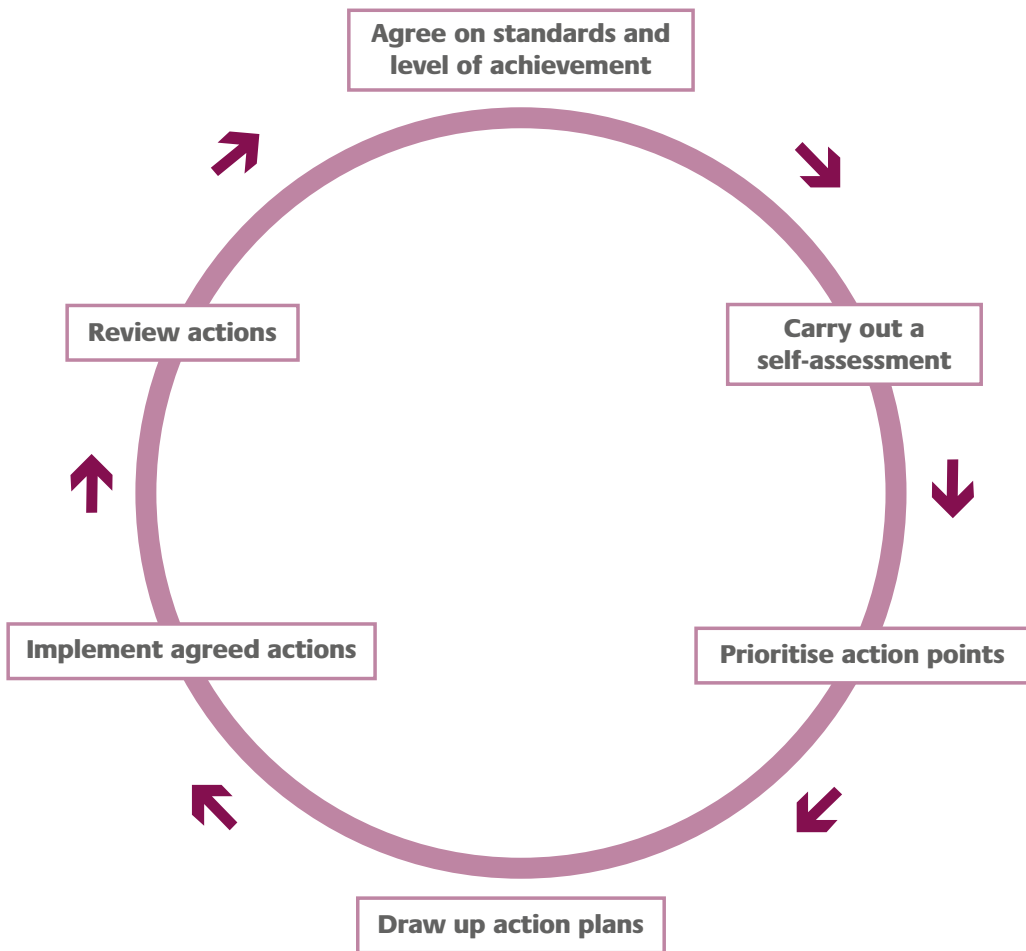
If you meet the standards, you will receive an award. This may be in the form of a certificate or plaque and you may have the option of using a logo on your headed paper and website. You can then 'tell the world' that your organisation meets the standards and is externally accredited. For some funders, external accreditation can carry more weight than self-assessment alone.

Your award will expire, so you will need to reapply for the award periodically, which will mean further costs and time investment. Costs vary considerably depending on the approach used and the size of your organisation. Many organisations find that the benefits of external recognition make it a worthwhile investment.

continuous improvement

The continuous improvement cycle

The diagram below shows how quality management is not a process that you *complete*. After one improvement cycle you may need to review the standards themselves and their fit for your organisation. Your organisation and the external environment will constantly change, and you will need to engage in a continuous cycle of assessment, improvement and review. If your quality system has more than one level of achievement, you may start a new process of self-assessment at the same level, or go up to the next level.



Establishing a quality culture

It may be tempting to take some action to improve things in your organisation and then stop, because other things are more pressing, or simply because day-to-day tasks take up the time. But quality improvement means that concerns for quality should not be seen as separate to, or added to, your routine work. You will find it easier to continue your work on quality if you include quality in everyday activities so that it becomes an integral part of your planning, your management, the way you do things, and the services you provide for your users.

To build quality improvement into your organisation effectively, here are some things to consider:

- Put quality issues on the agenda of all internal meetings, including meetings of the Board.
- Make sure you address quality in all funding applications.
- Include work on quality and quality improvements in annual plans.
- Include quality in all project proposals.
- Make sure job descriptions are clear about quality improvement and that it is discussed during induction for Board members, staff and volunteers.
- Discuss aspects of quality in team meetings, staff supervisions and appraisals.
- Write about quality in the annual report and put it on the annual general meeting agenda.

You may find it helpful to look at the way other organisations or other parts of your own organisation are doing things. Benchmarking means deciding on a particular activity in your organisation that you want to improve, then finding another organisation that is very good at that activity and trying to learn from it.

Continuing your work on quality and establishing a quality culture are important because quality is about making your organisation adaptable and able to respond to your users' needs and the outside world as they change. Building quality into your annual work plans will help your organisation to remain healthy and to continue to provide the best possible services. Above all, it will help the work you do make a real difference.

These are some top tips suggested by organisations that have introduced a quality system:

Don't re-invent the wheel

- Talk to other people who are using quality standards.
- Network and get support through your membership organisation or local development agency and through events and conferences.

For useful contacts go to page 31: **Where to go for more information.**

Approach

- Keep it simple.
- Don't treat it as just a paper exercise. Quality improvement involves the people in an organisation and its management and will result in real development for the organisation.
- Make sure that quality improvement is a team effort.
- Think about possible difficulties in advance. It won't always be easy. Some people may be resistant because they:
 - are cynical about yet another 'initiative'
 - already have a heavy workload
 - are worried about criticism
 - may be concerned that implementation may 'get stuck' or not bring any benefits.

Talk to staff and volunteers about these fears and concerns.

- Integrate your quality system into the way you think about and organise your work.

Plan and be prepared

- Get commitment from your Board.
- Be realistic about the amount of work involved.
- Work out the real costs, including staff and volunteer time and money.

Take your time

- Make sure timescales are realistic.
- Remember that organisational culture and attitudes won't change overnight.

Keep motivated

- Prioritise the areas you work on so that staff see some real benefits as early as possible.
- Once you have adopted a system, don't stop. The aim is for continuous improvement.

table 1: the scope of each approach to quality

This table shows the different aspects of quality covered by each approach.

	PQASSO	Customer Service Excellence	Excellence Model	Investors in People (IIP)	Investing in Volunteers	ISO 9001	Quality First	VISIBLE
Edition	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010	2008	2004	2005
Leadership / management	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial management	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓
Staff / volunteer management	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Process management	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
Learning and development	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Governance	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓
Equality and diversity	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Involvement of users	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓
Outcome focused	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Environmental issues	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x

table 2: choosing between different approaches to quality

	PQASSO	Customer Service Excellence	Excellence Model	Investors in People
Edition	2008	2008	2009	2009
Experience of use in the sector	High	Low	Low	High
Suitability for size and type of organisation	All voluntary and community organisations	All	Not well suited to small organisations	All
Areas covered	All areas	Focuses on service users.	All areas	Focuses on development of people to support your objectives.
Demand on staff time	Medium	Medium	Medium / High	Medium
Cost to buy a copy of the standards	Low	Free online	Low	Free online
Complexity	Low	Medium	High	Medium
Support / training available	Workbook and CD-ROM for doing it yourself Local network of mentors Training	Free online self-assessment tool and guidance Consultancy and training	Publications Training	Free online diagnostic tool Support is built into assessment process.
Cost of face-to-face support / training	Low	Medium	High	Medium
Availability of external accreditation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Investing in Volunteers	ISO 9001	Quality First	VISIBLE
	2010	2008	2004	2005
	Medium	Medium / high	Medium	Medium
	All organisations using volunteers	All	Small / no paid staff	Community organisations
	Focuses on management of volunteers.	Focuses on your quality management system.	All areas	Operating standards for community organisations
	Medium	High	Low / medium	Medium
	Free online	Low	Low	Low
	Low	High	Low	Low
	Free online toolkit E-learning programmes Support is built into assessment process.	Publications Training Consultancy	Not available	Free online support, guidance and resources Network of local agents
	Low	High	Not available	Low
	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

glossary

Accreditation

A process of certifying or guaranteeing that certain standards are met, by assessing an organisation against the standards. This is usually done by an outside agency.

Assessment

Judgement about an organisation's performance.

Continuous improvement

The process of doing, reviewing and improving that is part of an organisation's culture and built into its regular cycle of planning and delivery.

Outcomes

The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of services and activities provided by an organisation.

Quality

The extent to which a product or service satisfies the expectations of stakeholders. Quality is about excellence in the way that the organisation is run, in service delivery and about achieving the very best results.

Quality improvement

Quality improvement is about doing better: better in both the services the organisation offers and in the way the organisation is run.

Quality assurance system

A systematic and consistent way of implementing quality improvements in an organisation.

Quality assurance

The process of implementing quality improvements.

Quality standard

An agreed level of service or organisational performance that should always be met.

Quality standards

A framework of measurable components for achieving a recognised level of quality performance within an organisation. Achievement of quality standards demonstrates that an organisation has met the requirements. Examples of quality standards include, PQASSO, ISO 9001 and liP.

Self-assessment

A process by which people within an organisation make judgements about its performance, usually against a set of quality standards.

Stakeholders

The people or groups who are either affected by or who can affect the activities of an organisation. In voluntary and community organisations they include users and beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, funders, investors, purchasers, other agencies, partners, Board members, donors, supporters and members, suppliers, regulatory bodies, policy makers and the wider community.

where to go for more information

Parent bodies of the quality approaches described in this booklet

**Birmingham Voluntary
Service Council**
(Quality First)
138 Digbeth
Birmingham B5 6DR
Tel 0121 643 4343
Email admin@birmingham.cvs.org.uk
www.bvsc.org

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

British Standards Institution
(ISO 9001)
389 Chiswick High Road
London W4 4AL
Tel 020 8996 9001
Email cservices@bsi-global.com
www.bsigroup.com

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

Cabinet Office
(Customer Service Excellence)
Customer Service Excellence Team
Government Communications
Policy Projects Team
22/26 Whitehall
London SW1A 2WH
Tel 020 7276 1720
Email cse@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk
www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Investors in People UK
(Investors in People)
7-10 Chandos Street
London W1G 9DQ
Tel 020 7467 1900
Email information@iipuk.co.uk
www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

Community Matters
(VISIBLE)
12-20 Baron Street
London N1 9LL
Tel 020 7837 7887
Email info@communitymatters.org.uk
www.communitymatters.org.uk

Volunteering England
(Investing in Volunteers)
Regents Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL
Tel 0845 305 6979
Email volunteering@volunteeringengland.org
www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

Other useful contacts

NAVCA

The Tower
2 Furnival Square
Sheffield S1 4QL
Tel 0114 278 6636
Email navca@navca.org.uk
www.navca.org.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

Regent's Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL
Tel 020 7713 6161
Email ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action

61 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast BT15 2GB
Northern Ireland
Tel 028 9087 7777
Email nicva@nicva.org
www.nicva.org

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

Mansfield Traquair Square
15 Mansfield Place
Edinburgh EH3 6BB
Tel 0131 556 3882
Textphone 0131 557 6483
Email enquiries@scvo.org.uk
www.scvo.org.uk

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

Baltic House
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FH
Tel 029 20 431700
Textphone 029 20 431702
Email enquires@wcva.org.uk
www.wcva.org.uk

Cass Business School

Centre for Charity Effectiveness
(Tools for Success)
106 Bunhill Road
London
EC1Y 8TZ
Tel 020 7040 8600
Email knowhow@city.ac.uk
www.cass.city.ac.uk
www.knowhownonprofit.org

Charity Commission Direct

PO Box 1227
Liverpool L69 3UG
Tel 0845 3000 218
Textphone 0845 3000 219
www.charity-commission.gov.uk

about Charities Evaluation Services

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) is an independent charity with unrivalled expertise in monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance systems in the voluntary sector.

CES produces a range of publications, including PQASSO, the quality system specially designed for small, medium or large voluntary and community organisations.

How will CES work with you?

Phone us on 020 7713 5722 or email us on enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk for free advice.

Our consultants will talk to you about your organisation's particular needs and offer you practical advice about monitoring, evaluation, self-evaluation and quality systems.

What services does CES offer?

In-house training

CES offers training in monitoring, evaluation and quality systems. Training courses can be run in-house and tailored specifically to the needs of your organisation.

Open training

We also run a programme of training courses covering monitoring and evaluation and quality systems from our accessible central London venue. Courses include:

- Pathways to quality
- Implementing PQASSO
- PQASSO – an overview
- PQASSO mentor training
- EFQM Excellence Model – an overview
- Using the EFQM Excellence Model for continuous improvement
- PQASSO Quality Mark peer reviewer training
- How to demonstrate outcomes
- How to collect data
- How to design successful questionnaires
- How to run successful focus groups
- How to analyse data
- Using evaluation to influence change
- Diversity essentials.

Contact us for our full training brochure on 020 7713 5722 or email enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk

Consultancy

Our consultancy service is flexible and provides support for organisations that want to understand and implement monitoring, evaluation and quality systems.

External evaluations

CES has carried out evaluations of a large number of organisations over the last 20 years as well as working with funders to evaluate their programmes and funding strategies.

Other publications from Charities Evaluation Services

Next Steps in Quality: PQASSO in practice, 2nd edition (2010)

Practical Monitoring and Evaluation: a guide for voluntary organisations, 3rd edition (2009)

How are you Doing? A review of health checks used by the voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations in their capacity building work (2009)

Demonstrating the Difference (2009)

Becoming More Effective: an introduction to monitoring and evaluation for refugee organisations (2008)

Your Project and its Outcomes (2007)

Using ICT to Improve your Monitoring and Evaluation (2008)

Keeping on Track: a guide to setting and using indicators (2008)

Benchmarking Made Simple: a step-by-step guide (2008)

Performance Improvement: a handbook for mentors (2006)

Managing Outcomes: a guide for homelessness organisations (2003)

First Steps in Monitoring and Evaluation (2002)

Does your Money Make a Difference? (2001)

Managing Evaluation, 2nd edition (1999)

Evaluation Discussion Papers

PQASSO 3rd edition

PQASSO 3rd edition CD Rom

For prices, please contact CES on 020 7713 5722 or email enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk



4 Coldbath Square
London EC1R 5HL

t +44 (0) 20 7713 5722

f +44 (0) 20 7713 5692

e enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk

w www.ces-vol.org.uk

Charity number in England and Wales 803602

Charity number in Scotland SC040937

Company limited by guarantee

Registered in England and Wales number 2510318