



Lambeth Voluntary Action Council Case Study

Introduction

Lambeth Voluntary Action Council (LVAC) is an independent membership-based voluntary organisation which represents, supports and develops Lambeth's voluntary and community sector.

Charlotte Hennessy, Capacity Building Officer for Quality Assurance at LVAC, became a Charities Evaluation Services (CES) PQASSO Mentor in January 2010. This was part of a Lambeth Council funded project to support ten organisations to implement the self-assessment and submit their PQASSO Quality Mark application by March 2012. Here she talks about her experience of working with CES, PQASSO, Mentoring and the work that she has done to date.



A Mentor's View

Support from CES

The support from CES has been really great. First of all I went to the two-day Implementing PQASSO training course and then a few weeks later I went on the three-day PQASSO Mentor Training Course. The training is very well constructed and delivered well, and you come away with a feeling of not only what PQASSO is but also how to work with people through it. You think about it in a conceptual way as well as the practicalities of implementing within organisations.

Since the training I have only needed to call CES a couple of times, but I feel that I can call them and ask questions anytime and it is reassuring to have the experts there at the end of the phone. Also I find the PQASSO Mentors webmail a great resource to stay in touch with other mentors and the follow up and sharing of information is really useful.

Being a Mentor and working with PQASSO

I'm working with a range of organisations in the Lambeth area - for example arts based organisations working with young people. The organisations selected to be a part of the project were chosen following an application process based on their commitment to working towards a Quality Mark so are all very committed to

achieving it. It is still early days so the champions within the organisations are still at the stage of working out the best way to implement PQASSO and involve their organisations, but also fit it in to work plans. Despite the fact that they are keen, it is a challenging process as well so it is great to be able to use the knowledge gained from CES to support the organisations.

I feel that PQASSO is very important within the sector and it gives all organisations the potential to achieve a quality mark. Although the process of implementing quality frameworks is useful for organisations, it is also important to have that external recognition too and that is a real value of doing PQASSO.

Within the project that I am currently working on the council have funded a dedicated post to support the ten organisations participating. In my experience I think the mentor process makes a big contribution to supporting organisations. Having an external person to your organisation who is there as a consistent presence that you build a relationship with throughout the process is important as sounding board, but also undergoing a process like this is a big undertaking and having a mentor can really help to keep the momentum up – someone consistent to help to drive things but also support you.

As a mentor you are working with several organisations so you are constantly learning what organisations are doing, and you understand the context of the different organisations that you are working with, so you can develop more examples and resources and your repertoire of how people are using PQASSO expands and you can share learnings between the organisations. Working with CES and being a PQASSO Mentor can really make a difference to the organisations you are supporting.

Benefits to the mentor's organisation

Being a mentor has enabled me to improve the capacity building support I can offer to VCOs across a broad range of issues. Because PQASSO looks at all areas of an organisation, being a PQASSO mentor means that you carry the principles into whatever area of an organisation you are working with in a different capacity, even if they are not implementing PQASSO. That's the great thing about using PQASSO as you develop a broad understanding of issues because it looks at all aspects of organisational life and provides a structure for improvement for all types of organisations.

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