

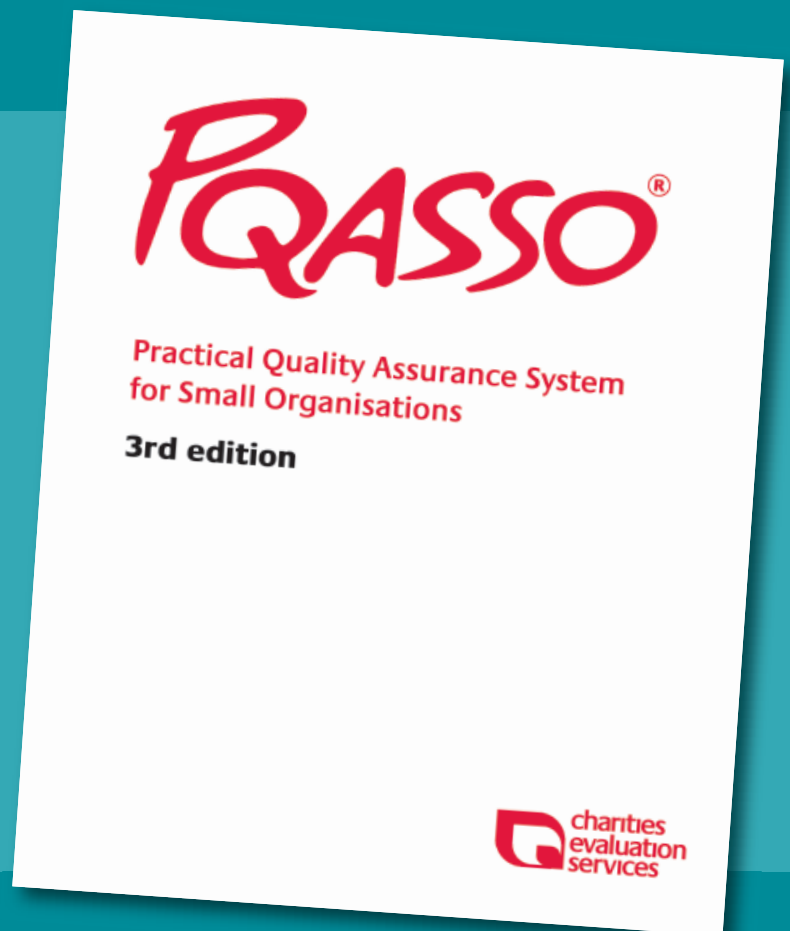
# PQASSO<sup>®</sup>

quality standards for voluntary  
and community organisations

a brief guide for voluntary and  
community organisations

*'Using PQASSO  
has enabled this  
organisation to  
dramatically  
improve its own  
management and  
the delivery of  
its services.'*

The Octobus Project



**PQASSO** – the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations – is the most widely used quality assurance system in the UK voluntary and community sector. 13,000 copies of PQASSO have been sold to small, medium and large organisations in the UK. It is also increasingly being used internationally.

**This guide provides some basic information about PQASSO for voluntary and community organisations.**

## What is PQASSO?

PQASSO is an 'off the shelf' quality assurance system. It offers a practical step-by-step approach to enable you to improve the way your organisation runs and to help you to improve the quality of your services. Designed as a workpack, it is written in plain English and is simple and straightforward to use.

PQASSO covers **12 quality standards**:

- Planning
- Governance
- Leadership and management
- User-centred service
- Managing people
- Learning and development
- Managing money
- Managing resources
- Communications and promotion
- Working with others
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Results.

PQASSO offers a staged approach to implementing quality through **three levels of achievement**. Very small or newly formed organisations may decide just to work towards achieving level 1. After achieving level 1, established or more complex organisations may decide to progress to level 2 and then perhaps to level 3. Each level provides guidance on what is required to run a healthy, efficient and effective organisation.

*'PQASSO enabled us to look frankly at what we do and measure against a standard: much better than working on the basis of an assumption that you're "doing the right thing".'*

Theatre Resource

## How does PQASSO benefit your organisation?

Organisations using PQASSO can gain the following benefits:

- more effective and efficient organisational systems and procedures
- better quality of service for users
- increased motivation for staff, trustees and volunteers
- better communication among staff, trustees and volunteers
- more creative thinking which, in turn, encourages fresh perspectives and new ways of working
- increased organisational learning
- continuous improvement over time.

PQASSO focuses strongly on outcomes. As well as helping you to plan and implement improvements, PQASSO also gives you a framework to measure the differences that such changes actually make to your organisation and your service users.

## What services are available to support PQASSO users?

Charities Evaluation Services – the author and owner of PQASSO – offers a range of services to support you to implement PQASSO or to consider doing so.

### Training

We offer a range of training courses in London on how to implement PQASSO. Wherever you are based in the UK, we can also offer 'in house' training at your organisation.

### Next Steps in Quality: PQASSO in Practice

This no-nonsense publication is a practical and detailed guide to the PQASSO implementation process.

## Licensed PQASSO mentors

A UK-wide network of trained mentors – development workers, consultants and other professionals – have been licensed by Charities Evaluation Services to offer training and support to help you implement PQASSO.

## PQASSO CD-ROM

The CD-ROM is an information management tool that you can use alongside the PQASSO workbook. It helps you to plan and monitor your progress in implementing PQASSO, manage the self-assessment process, record your evidence and develop action plans. It also allows you to print your PQASSO records in a variety of formats. The latest version of the CD-ROM includes features to support you to prepare for a PQASSO Quality Mark peer review. Please note that it is not possible to implement PQASSO using the CD-ROM alone.

**For more information about these services, please contact Charities Evaluation Services on 020 7713 5722 or at [enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk) or visit [www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)**

*'The process was easy to follow and very user-friendly – a good opportunity to systematically review all our processes. It was a good exercise for staff and volunteers and gave us the opportunity to prove to funders that we assess and evaluate our services.'*

Ryedale Special Families

## How are the PQASSO standards assessed?

PQASSO is designed as a **self-assessment** tool. This means that your organisation assesses itself against the quality standards using an evidence-based method to ensure reliability.

In response to demand from our users, we introduced the **PQASSO Quality Mark** service in 2008. This is for organisations that require an externally assessed 'kitemark' to validate their progress made through self-assessment.

Organisations can use PQASSO as a self-assessment tool *with* or *without* gaining the **externally assessed** PQASSO Quality Mark. Both approaches will benefit organisations.



The **PQASSO Quality Mark** is the external assessment service for PQASSO users. It offers accreditation against either level 1 or level 2 of the PQASSO quality standards. We hope to offer accreditation against level 3 in 2009.

Achieving the PQASSO Quality Mark shows that your organisation's achievement against the PQASSO standards has been verified externally. This means that, before applying, your organisation must have self-assessed against your chosen level of PQASSO; you must be confident that you have fully met all the requirements of PQASSO at that level and have evidence to demonstrate this.

The external assessment is carried out by **peer reviewers** – members of the voluntary and community sector who have been specially trained by Charities Evaluation Services. Peer reviewers have the credibility that comes from working within the sector and from having used PQASSO themselves.

The fee for a PQASSO Quality Mark peer review depends on the size of your organisation and the level at which it is being reviewed.

**For more information about the PQASSO Quality Mark, and details of the costs involved, visit [www.pqassoqualitymark.org.uk](http://www.pqassoqualitymark.org.uk) or email [pqm@ces-vol.org.uk](mailto:pqm@ces-vol.org.uk)**

Charities Evaluation Services is currently recruiting peer reviewers – for more information visit the PQASSO Quality Mark website.

The next four pages illustrate one of the 12 quality areas covered by PQASSO: this example focuses on **user-centred service**.

## 4

## user-centred service

### the standard

The organisation recognises and values its users and builds good relationships with them. Users are central to the design, delivery and review of services and activities. The organisation is focused on achieving better outcomes for users and represents their interests.

### benefits

Working on this standard involves placing your users at the heart of your organisation and ensuring you have the appropriate systems and practices to support sound user involvement.

This standard will help you assess how well you:

- value users as the experts on their own lives, and learn from them
- give users a voice in service design, delivery and review
- help users achieve better outcomes
- ensure that services are accessible and effective for all intended user groups.

### what the standard covers

Users can include people or organisations who:

- use or benefit from your services or activities or have done so in the past
- fall within your target group but do not currently use your activities or services
- speak or act on behalf of users
- support or care for users.

**Recognising and valuing users** means being clear about who your target users are and promoting a culture of respect, tolerance and understanding which affirms the equal value of all users.

**Achieving better outcomes for users** means working with them to make the changes or gain the benefits they want and need.

**Representing the interests of users** means giving users a voice or making their case to statutory and other agencies.

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Each of the 12 quality areas starts with **the standard** and the **benefits** of the standard, and then describes the elements of **what the standard covers**.

# 4

## user-centred service

**The standard:** The organisation recognises and values its users and builds good relationships with them. Users are central to the design, delivery and review of services and activities. The organisation is focused on achieving better outcomes for users and represents their interests.

### level 1

The organisation knows who its users are, avoids unfair discrimination, and makes its services accessible. Information about users is gathered and recorded, and the organisation responds appropriately to user feedback.

#### Indicators

	Not met	Just started	Progressing well	Fully met
1 User groups are clearly defined and targeted to prevent unfair discrimination or exclusion from services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Services and activities are based on the identified needs of the organisation's users, including disadvantaged groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 The organisation plans, promotes and delivers its services so that it is fully accessible to its users.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Personal information about individual users is recorded and held confidentially, meeting data protection requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 The organisation works closely with individual users to monitor their needs, identify desired outcomes, and review progress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Users are given detailed information about the organisation's services and activities, and are encouraged to make appropriate choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 User feedback is encouraged and recorded, and complaints are dealt with openly and promptly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**Indicators** show broadly what your organisation should be doing to meet its desired level of PQASSO. Self-assessment involves different people in your organisation discussing how well you are doing against the indicators and whether any improvements are needed. This example shows indicators for **level 1**.

**The standard:** The organisation recognises and values its users and builds good relationships with them. Users are central to the design, delivery and review of services and activities. The organisation is focused on achieving better outcomes for users and represents their interests.

## level 1

The organisation knows who its users are, avoids unfair discrimination, and makes its services accessible. Information about users is gathered and recorded, and the organisation responds appropriately to user feedback.

### Sources of evidence

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- 1 Aims and objectives which define the user groups. Monitoring information.
- 2 Annual report demonstrating public benefit. Needs analyses. Funding applications and project plans. Operational plan. Minutes of planning meetings. Management reports.
- 3 Publicity and promotional activity. Opening hours or contact hours. Response times for phone calls. Answerphone facilities. Information and facilities for people with disabilities, sensory impairment or other specific needs.
- 4 Filing systems, databases and user records. Monitoring information. Confidentiality policy. Data protection registration certificate.
- 5 Case records and other user records or files.
- 6 Information about the range of services and activities available, including information on fees, cancellation, data protection and confidentiality. Publicity materials, including leaflets and flyers.
- 7 Records of feedback, complaints and suggestions from users. Records of action taken in response to complaints.

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**Sources of evidence** offer some ideas about where you might look for evidence to demonstrate that your organisation has met the indicators. This example shows sources of evidence for **level 1**.

## action plan

This template may help you devise an action plan to improve the way something works within your organisation and to meet one of the PQASSO indicators.

Quality area:	Level 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 <input type="checkbox"/>					
Indicator:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

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:	

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Where self-assessment shows that your organisation needs to make some organisational improvements, you will need to develop an **action plan**. PQASSO includes a range of templates to help organisations to carry out an initial self-assessment, record their evidence and devise an action plan.

For more information about PQASSO, or PQASSO-related services, contact us by telephone on 020 7713 5722, by fax on 020 7713 5692 or email us at enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk, or visit our website at www.ces-vol.org.uk

To order your copy of PQASSO, fill in the order form and return it to: Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN.

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PQASSO workpack (3rd edition)	£95.00		£
PQASSO CD-ROM (3rd edition)	£54.00 (includes VAT)		£
<i>Next Steps in Quality: PQASSO in Practice</i>	£7.95		£
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<b>Sub-total</b>			£
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