



**CabinetOffice**  
Office of the **Third Sector**

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ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
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**BIRMINGHAM**



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# Why Third Sector quality matters to policy makers

## A research perspective

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# Policy Environment

‘Step Change’ in policy environment since mid 1990s

- Third Sector policy profile in Third Way
- Third Sector ‘Partnership’ with Government
- From ‘Vertical’ to ‘Horizontal’ support

# Office of the Third Sector

Strategic support

- Compact
- Future Builders
- Capacity Builders

Public service delivery

Civil renewal

# Public Funding

Growing as source of income – 31% 2006/07

Shift from Grants to Contracts

- Procurement, Commissioning, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Competitive funding environment

# Demonstrating Quality

Public funding requires TSOs to meet policy objectives

Commissioners expect proof of organisational quality – evidenced through monitoring and evaluation

Applied to grants as well as contracts

# Demonstrating Quality

Now a structural feature of relations between  
State and Third Sector

Policy environment expects quality as a  
prerequisite for public support

Hence quality has become a feature of TSO  
governance more generally

# What is Quality?

Procedural approaches

- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Targets and Indicators
- Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes
- Quality Audit
- Social Return on Investment

# What is Quality?

Substantive questions

Definitional issues – what *is* quality?

Internal or External perspectives?

Organisational or Activity focus?

Outputs and Outcomes – or Impact?

# What is Quality? – A Research Question

Evaluation research  
Theories of change

- Problems of causality
- Multiple causality and Over-determination
- Counterfactuals

# What is Quality? – Some Research Questions

Why are policy makers concerned with quality?

How is this translated into support, funding and regulation?

How is quality measured procedurally?

# What is Quality? – Some Research Questions

Do TSOs have independent definitions and measures of quality?

Where are these derived from?

Internal or external definition and measurement?

# What is Quality? – Whose Question

For whom is quality a concern – Producers, Users or Citizens?

Who is leading the ‘discourse’ – policy makers, national agencies, TSOs,..., or users?

To what extent does the ‘discourse’ determine the definition, and the measurement?

# Why third sector quality matters to policy makers?

A research question – will need to reconcile

Different perspectives

Different definitions

Different forms and aims of TSOs

Quality may not be a single outcome!

# TSRC

Economic and Social Research Council - £5m

Office of Third Sector - £5m

Barrow Cadbury Trust - £250k

*Five year commitment*

# TSRC

University of Birmingham – Centre base, Pete Alcock, Director

University of Southampton – John Mohan, Deputy Director

University of Kent – Jeremy Kendall

Middlesex University – Fergus Lyon (Social Enterprise)

# Research Programmes

Evidence base

Theoretical and policy context

Mapping and measuring

Impact

# Knowledge Transfer

ESRC & OTS commitment

TSRC

- Dissemination
- Engagement
- Capacity Building

*Knowledge Exchange Team*

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