



Serendipity
Enterprising
Solutions



charities
evaluation
services

Serendipity Enterprising Solutions (SES)

About SES

Serendipity Enterprising Solutions (SES) are a Community Interest Company (CIC). Incorporated in April 2008, SES provide a range of expert community development services including supporting others to set up social enterprise, and project creation and development. They also offer help with sustainability and fundraising and training on a range of topics.

SES are currently working through PQASSO self-assessment, with the aim of applying for the externally assessed PQASSO Quality Mark in the future. Here, they talk to us about deciding to implement a quality assurance system, their experiences of the PQASSO process, and better demonstrating their impact.

Why Quality?

For the last five years, SES has been working – in one form or another - with local authorities to deliver services. We realise that, at the moment, there is not always a requirement to have a quality assurance system in place – but feel that this may change with the move to intelligent commissioning. Our view is that by starting now we will be ahead of the game.

We decided to implement PQASSO for two reasons. Firstly, we were encouraging organisations we were working with to consider quality assurance and we felt that to do this effectively we needed to understand the different concepts. Secondly, as a not-for-profit company in a fairly new format we were aware that we were being scrutinised by some of the more traditional third sector organisations - by undertaking this system [PQASSO] we are demonstrating our commitment to the sector.

Why PQASSO?

Most systems we had experienced were aimed primarily at the private or statutory sector, or were sector specific (eg childcare). But PQASSO was devised for the third sector.

While there is a need to 'translate' some of the units that were obviously designed for voluntary organisations, for example, modules relating to inclusive governance, it did offer the best 'fit'. Through discussion with our local PQASSO mentor we have been able to successfully translate the essence of what is being asked [in each quality area] to suit different structures.

The difference PQASSO is making

SES outline a number of key areas where PQASSO has made a difference to their work.

PQASSO has helped us to realise that we do have a lot of information, and lots of policies. When we first started the self-assessment process we were not organized in any way, shape, or form – we knew we did certain things, but we were hard pushed to demonstrate it. Internally, understanding this process – where we know something is happening but are unable to show it – has really helped us to co-ordinate our work. We now have a single person responsible for collecting materials and evidence.

PQASSO has also helped us to be more proactive in our work. It has helped us to realise that we need to plan more and avoid crisis management. We have implemented a new internal monitoring system to accurately record our work and its achievement – the first result of this had been an improved annual report that goes beyond basic legal requirements and is more a narrative of our work.

In working through PQASSO we have realized that we were previously constantly underselling ourselves. We were very bad at telling people not just what we did, but especially how well we did it.

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