

QUALITY STANDARDS IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR – BRIEFING (LAST UPDATED APRIL 2017)

There are many different Quality Standards available to organisations in the charity and community sectors.

Some, like PQASSO, are **general** (ie for all types of charities, regardless of what they do) covering issues such as basic governance structures, accountability and service-user involvement.

Others are tailored to **specific types of work**, such as the Advice Quality Standard.

The amount of work and cost involved in attaining a Quality Standard varies depending on the type and size of your organisation, the accrediting body of the Quality Standard, and your organisation's ability to meet the standard's requirements - for example, the policies and procedures you already have in place.

Below is a listing of the most well-known **general** quality standards – but for more detail on exactly what aspects of quality are covered, relative costs demands on staff time and support resources available please download these two tables from the Charities Evaluation Service:

[Choosing between different approaches to quality](#)

[The scope of each approach to quality](#)

GENERAL QUALITY STANDARDS– covering aspects of people management

Investors in People (IiP)

This is a single focus standard, designed for any organisation and recognised across the voluntary, public and private sectors. [Investors in People](#) aims to improve organisational performance through people management and development. It is externally assessed and results in a quality standard which is valid for three years.

Investors in People focuses on one element of quality management; that of human resources and people management. It is the most well-known standard, and was widely viewed as useful and not too bureaucratic, with a good assessment process. It was also seen as sending a good message to potential employees.

Assessment costs vary on organisation size and spread, but are in the region of £550 per day plus VAT and assessor expenses.

Investing in Volunteers (IiV)

[Investing in Volunteers](#) is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. It helps to benchmark the quality of volunteer management and involvement, prove and improve the effectiveness of work with volunteers and enhance an organisation's reputation.

The cost of assessment for IiV assessment is £1,000 for organisations with up to 50 volunteers.

Investors in Diversity

Developed for all organisations in all sectors, this standard focuses on inclusion, equality and diversity. It has been developed by the [National Centre for Diversity](#).

The cost for the Investors in Diversity for Small Charities Award is £995 + VAT.

GENERAL – covering overall organisational quality

PQASSO Standards (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations)

Developed by the Charities Evaluation Services specifically for the voluntary and community sector, PQASSO is the leading quality standard and used most widely across the sector. Originally developed as a self-assessment model, the system covers all aspects of running an organisation. Its flexibility means it can be used by all types of organisations, including charities, social enterprises, and community interest companies. It is also appropriate for all sizes – from small community groups with a handful of employees to larger charities with over 2,000 employees. The system now offers an externally-accredited [PQASSO Quality Mark](#) which is endorsed by the Charity Commission at certain levels. The workbook costs £105.

Accreditation starts from £1500 plus VAT.

EFQM/Business Excellence Model

This is a very popular model for businesses and not for profit organisations throughout Europe. The Excellence model is based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model of quality management. It is a method used mainly in large business organisations and rather less so through the voluntary and community sectors (though it has been shown to have possible applications in this area). The model is seen by those who develop it as a tool for continually improving your own organisation through understanding where you're at, where the gaps are and enabling you to develop solutions. The EFQM Excellence Model allows people to understand the cause and effect relationships between what their organisation does and the Results it achieves. The [Excellence Model](#) is externally evaluated.

For the organisations that use the [EFQM Excellence Model](#) it is viewed quite positively, or as the 'least worst' option because it looks at both organisational processes and outcomes, much of the work for the standard can be done internally, and the model has been adapted and tailored to the specific requirements of several organisations: its flexibility was appreciated.

Costs only available on request but rated by the Charities Evaluation Service as 'high'.

GENERAL – covering organisational procedures:

ISO 9000 and family

[ISO 9000](#) and family relates to quality management and is designed to help organisations meet the needs of customers and other stakeholders. The system looks at how you deliver your products, services and activities through the processes that you use. The standards are published by ISO, the International Organisation for Standardisation, and are available through the British Standards Institution.

They are part of a wider set of 'ISO' standards, including *ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems*. However, the most commonly used ones for our sector are *ISO 9000 (quality management)* and [ISO 9000:2008 \(quality management systems\)](#). [The ISO website](#) includes particular guidance for small or medium sized organisations on how to implement the systems. Once certified, organisations can carry the ISO mark for the relevant standard that has been achieved.

Costs vary depending on organisation size – but for 16-25 employees an indicative cost is around £1700-£2000 plus around £800 annual audit fee.

More information on ISO 9000 is available on the [BSI](#) website

QUALITY SYSTEMS FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Community Organisations:

Visible Standards

[VISIBLE Standards](#) are nationally accredited quality standards for community organisations. They are aimed at medium to large community organisations often referred to as community anchors. However many other organisations can benefit from VISIBLE.

Concentrating on the management systems and policies that a community organisation has in place via a series of online questions and guidance notes. Suitable for community organisations of any size.

Accreditation starts from £1400 plus VAT.

The [VISIBLE Review](#) is simpler and cheaper, but is not externally accredited.

Information, Advice and Guidance on Learning and Work:

Matrix

Made up of four strands, the [Matrix Standard](#) is the unique quality framework for the effective delivery of information, advice and/or guidance on learning and work. It promotes the delivery of high quality information, advice and/or guidance by ensuring organisations review, evaluate and develop their service; encourage the take up of professionally recognised qualifications and the continuous professional development of their staff. The purpose of the matrix Standard is to provide a benchmark for organisations to assess/measure their advice and support services which ultimately support individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals.

Costings for a small organisation (1-24 people) requires a tailored costing (call 020 3880 5059). For 25-50 people the cost is £2400 plus expenses plus VAT.

The Matrix Standard was felt to be more impact-focused and less onerous than other standards.

Mentoring and Befriending:

APS

[APS](#) is the national quality standard specifically designed for mentoring and befriending projects. It consists of 12 elements which focus on the key management and operational areas that underpin the effectiveness of any mentoring or befriending project.

Pricing depends on the total number of volunteer mentors/befrienders in the project and for new voluntary, community and statutory sector organisations price ranges from £720 plus VAT per site of up to 25 people to £1340 plus VAT per site of 51 people or over.

Refugee Organisations:

QASRO (Quality Assurance System for Refugee Organisations)

[QASRO](#) was developed by the Refugee Council, adapted from PQASSO. It entirely self-assessed but has no accreditation.

Alcohol and Drug Services:

QuADS (Quality in Alcohol and Drug Services)

The [QuADS](#) organisational standards provide criteria against which alcohol and drug treatment services can assess and develop their practice.

QuADS standards were developed by a joint Alcohol Concern / DrugScope project, funded by the Department of Health. QuADS organisational standards are part of the nationally accepted quality standards for drug treatment services. There is no external accreditation.

Supporting People:

QAF

Supporting People Accreditation and Quality Assessment Framework ([QAF](#)) is for organisations in receipt of Supporting People funding. Accredited by administering authorities with some organisations undergoing verification visits.