

QUALITY – MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE!

There is a vast range of quality models, frameworks and standards available ‘out there’. Why are there so many, and which is the best one to use? This leaflet provides an overview of the main ones available, what they do, who should use them, and where to find further information. Members of the Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium (WIC) will be happy to advise voluntary and community sector organisations in Worcestershire, and to signpost as appropriate for more detailed guidance and support.

1. What is ‘Quality’

Before you choose a quality model to work with, it is important to understand what ‘quality’ means. Basically, it is doing the right things in the right way, in order to meet the agreed needs of users. It also implies continually improving what you do and how you do it.

In order to do this, you have to:

- Understand what services your users want
- Manage the way in which you provide those services effectively and efficiently
- Manage human and financial resources well
- Measure what you have achieved
- Use these measurements to improve your organisation

2. What are Quality Models?

A variety of words such as standards, frameworks and systems are used to describe the same thing, although they have different focuses and are used in different ways. They are all models of what a good organisation should do. That is, they describe the sorts of things that you need to think about and do in order to provide a ‘quality’ service. The most important ones, and the way that they are used, are described below.

3. The Main National Quality Models

There are a number of models produced by national bodies that are used throughout the UK. The main ones are:

- **Investors in People (IiP)**

IiP is a model that focuses on the *development of paid staff, volunteers and trustees*, linked to an organisation’s aims and objectives. It contains requirements under 10 headings. Once organisations feel that they meet all the requirements they can apply to be certificated by external assessors. There is a charge for this. Further details of the model from iipuk.co.uk

- **Investors in Volunteers**

Investors in Volunteers was developed as an equivalent to IiP that focused purely on developing good practice in *organisations’ volunteer management*. It also has 10 indicators of

good practice, external assessment and certification, and a fee to cover this. Further details from investinginvolunteers.org.uk.

- **The Charter Mark**

The Charter Mark is designed to help organisations focus on, and improve, their *customer service and delivery to users*. It contains six criteria that describe how to do this. It is run by the Cabinet Office, with assessment and certification from four approved bodies. There is a fee charged for this. More details from www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/Chartermark

- **ISO 9001**

ISO 9001 was the original quality model, designed to focus on *processes and how you carry them out*. It contains 5 sections that describe how to manage processes well. Assessment and certification is available from a large number of approved 'certification bodies', on payment of a fee. Further details about ISO 9001 from bsi-global.com and about certification bodies from ukas.com.

- **The Quality Mark**

This model is for use only by those who *provide legal advice or information* of any kind. It covers most aspects of what you do. There are four different levels, ranging from simple self-help to those that carry out casework. Once you consider that you meet the requirements of the chosen level, you apply for certification. There is no cost for this. Further details from www.legalservices.gov.uk/qmark

- **EFQM Excellence Model**

The Excellence Model is a European-wide model of good practice that, unlike the above, covers *all aspects* of what you do, and is also designed for *self-assessment* and improvement rather than external certification. It has 9 criteria covering both what you do and what you achieve. There is no cost other than buying the booklet. Further details about the model and self-assessment from quality-foundation.co.uk

- **PQASSO**

The Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations was developed as a *self-assessment* tool for the voluntary and community sector, based on the Excellence Model. It has 12 quality areas covering *all aspects* of what you do, divided into 3 progressive levels of 'difficulty'. There is no cost other than buying the workbook. An external certification scheme for PQASSO is being developed, for which there will be a cost. Further details from ces-vol.org.uk

4. Regional, Sub-sectoral and other Models

There are a very large number of models designed for local, specific sub-sectoral or other use. They are usually based on the national models described above. The most well-known ones are:

- **The Big Picture**

Produced by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, this model is based on, and very similar, the Excellence Model, but designed for the voluntary sector. The SCVO also

trains individuals to become Peer Supporters to support other organisations to use the model. There is no cost other than buying the booklet. Contact: scvo.org.uk

- **Quality First**

Designed by Birmingham Voluntary Sector Council for organisations that are just staffed by volunteers, Quality First contains a workbook that helps you carry out a self-assessment in nine quality areas. There is no cost other than buying the workbook. Contact: claudiap@bvsc.org

- **Social auditing**

Social auditing is a process rather than a model. It enables an organisation to assess and demonstrate its social, economic, and environmental benefits and limitations. It is a way of measuring the extent to which an organisation lives up to the shared values and objectives it has committed itself to. Further details of how to carry it out from: socialauditnetwork.org.uk

- **Sub-sectoral schemes**

A number of Federated organisations such as Relate, NACAB, ACRE, Age Concern, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, etc have made it a condition of membership that you meet the requirements of a quality model developed specifically by them. These are usually based on a national framework such as the Excellence Model, adapted with some local extra requirements by themselves.

5. Local Sources of Help and Information (Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium members):

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