

# Choosing a Quality Assurance System

## Charter Mark

This standard is for organisations dealing with the public, including voluntary organisations that receive funding from the public sector. It looks at the quality of service delivery, checking that an organisation is placing customers at the centre of everything they do. The standard is externally assessed, with re-assessment every three years. Applicants are encouraged to network with each other through quality networks and events around the UK.

Visit: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/chartermark](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/chartermark)

## The EFQM Excellence Model

The EFQM Excellence Model was originally developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management for the private sector and has been in use since 1992. It provides a framework for self-assessment and continuous improvement covering all aspects of work. It is based on the idea that there are five enablers (leadership, people, policy and strategy, partnerships and resources, and processes) that lead to different categories of results (people results, customer results, society results and key performance results). It allows various methods for the self-assessment process but can be time-consuming. Visit: [www.efqm.org](http://www.efqm.org)

## Investors in People

This standard seeks to improve an organisation's performance through its people, especially by setting standards for the training and development of staff. Its four principles are commitment, planning, action and evaluation, underscored by 12 indicators of good practice. It is managed by Learning and Skills Councils and awarded by Investors in People UK, offering national recognition and external validation. Visit: [www.investorsinpeople.co.uk](http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk)

## ISO 9000

This group of standards focuses on how things are done and aims to help organisations achieve user satisfaction by preventing problems from developing within their services and products. When the system is in place, an organisation usually obtains an independent assessment by a certification body to check conformity with the standards requirements. Implementation to assessment generally takes between six to nine months. Visit: [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

## PQASSO

The Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO) was designed specifically for small and medium-sized organisations. Its flexibility and adaptability to organisations of varying types and sizes has made it a firm favourite in the sector. Designed as a work pack, it helps an organisation identify what it is doing well and where improvement is needed. Although originally set up as a self-assessment tool, there is the possibility that external accreditation may be introduced. Visit: [www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)

## **Quality First**

Based on PQASSO, this system is designed for very small organisations with no paid staff or only part-time staff. It was developed by Birmingham Council for Voluntary Service and piloted with small organisations in Birmingham. Like PQASSO, it was designed as a self-assessment tool. This system is based around nine quality areas and can also form the basis for moving on to more advanced systems.

Visit: [www.bvsc.org](http://www.bvsc.org)

## **QASRO**

The Quality Assurance System for Refugee Organisations was developed by the Refugee Council for Refugee Community Organisations and organisations which support them. It incorporates a quality standard similar to PQASSO and sections of guidance for refugee community organisations developing areas of service delivery (e.g. advice and interpreting).

Visit: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/support/quality.htm](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/support/quality.htm)

## **Community Legal Service Quality Mark**

This standard has been designed for organisations providing legal information and advice to the public. The Quality Mark has different levels to choose from depending on the information, advice and help offered by the organisation. Examples of these include general help, casework and specialist help. Organisations can apply for the Quality Mark at the level that best suits their service; an auditor reviews their application.

Visit: [www.legalservices.gov.uk/qmark](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/qmark)

## **Social audit**

Social auditing or social accounting was developed three decades ago to promote greater corporate social responsibility in the private sector. It aimed to allow companies to measure and report on their social performance and ethical behaviour and strengthen their accountability. For the voluntary sector, its relevance is in providing a systematic process to try to define and measure the broad and more intangible outcomes based on values and principles. Visit:

[www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk](http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk)

## **Other standards**

There is also a range of frameworks for specific work areas, such as community work, health, employment and residential care. More information about these can usually be obtained from relevant umbrella bodies.