

Quality systems and frameworks

A guide to off-the-shelf quality systems and frameworks.

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Externally accredited systems

Here is a list of the main off-the-shelf quality approaches that provide external accreditation.

Customer service

[Customer First](#) is designed for all organisations in all sectors, the standard focuses on customer service and is a certification model.

[Customer Service Excellence](#) (formerly Charter Mark) is the UK Government's national standard for excellence in customer service, originally designed for public sector organisations, now available to all sectors and organisations. The quality mark is valid for three years.

People

[Investors in People](#) is focused on staff management and development and requires an organisation to submit documentary evidence of its practice. The award is valid for three years.

[Investing in Volunteers](#) is the UK quality standard for volunteer management. The award is valid for three years.

Procedures

The [ISO 9001](#) is a generic international standard focused on an organisation's procedures. An external assessment followed by twice-yearly audits ensures the standards are being maintained.

The [Matrix Standard](#) is a certification standard for organisations delivering information, advice and/or guidance on learning and work.

General quality

[PQASSO](#) was specifically designed for the voluntary and community sector. It encompasses all aspects of an organisation. PQASSO is a self-assessment model, but has an optional Quality Mark, awarded following a process of peer review and which lasts for three years.

The [European Foundation for Quality Management \(EFQM\) Excellence Model](#) is an overarching and challenging self-assessment framework for continuous improvement. It is designed for any organisation in any sector. External assessment and awards are also available.

Sub-sectoral quality systems

The [AA1000 Assurance Standard](#) is a process standard for assessing and strengthening the credibility and quality of an organisation's social, economic and environmental reporting and related management and accountability processes.

[Becoming VISIBLE](#) is a standard for multi-purpose community organisations, and community organisations running community centres, developed by Community Matters. Self-assessment with optional certification available.

[The VISIBLE Standards](#) are nationally accredited standards particularly relevant to the needs of community organisations. Supporting resources include online guidance and self-assessment tools. External assessment is also available.

[Co-operativesUK Key Social and Co-operative Performance Indicators \(KSCPIs\)](#) comprise quantitative indicators intended to capture the co-operative, social and environmental performance of a co-operative. The indicators are provided to co-operatives for self assessment and the co-operatives are asked to report their findings back to Co-operativesUK.

The [NAVCA Performance Standards](#) for local infrastructure organisations focus on outcomes. They must be used in conjunction with a holistic generic standard such as PQASSO to achieve a quality mark.

[Quality First](#) is a quality system based on PQASSO but designed by Birmingham Council for Voluntary Service for very small, predominantly volunteer, organisations.

[Quality Assurance System for Refugee Organisations \(QASRO\)](#) is a holistic, self-assessment standard for refugee organisations and infrastructure organisations providing development support to them. It is adapted from PQASSO.

[Quality in Alcohol and Drug Services \(QuADS\)](#) is a fairly holistic self-assessment model which supports organisations to work towards standard required by relevant commissioners/regulators.

[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.

Charities Evaluation Services has [tables which compare what organisational areas are covered by different quality systems](#) and how they differ in terms of implementation, costs and accreditation.

Charities Evaluation Services have also released a new edition of [First Steps in Quality](#). (pdf 230.81kb)

You can read about the relationship between quality standards and the Compact undertakings for third sector organisations in ['Mapping third sector quality standards and the compact'](#) (pdf 2.34MB).

Health checks

Health checks are sometimes used by infrastructure organisations to work with frontline groups to identify areas for improvement. They use questions or indicators to raise thinking about the organisation and its development. They are often used for organisations not opting for formal quality systems. The Charities Evaluation Services have produced a [review of health checks used by voluntary and community sector organisations](#).

Quality systems and competitive tendering

You can also read about how quality systems and quality accreditation are scored in the selection or pre-qualification stage of a competitive tender process in the NAVCA article, [Do we need ISO](#). (pdf 1.67MB)

Useful links

Further overview of quality systems:

- [Charities Evaluation Services](#)
- [Proving and improving](#)