Fact Sheet 14 – Quality Standards

Many organisations choose to adopt externally approved formal quality standards, to show they are conforming with recognised good practice. Being able to demonstrate you have achieved a recognised quality standard shows that you have gone through a systematic way of ensuring your organisation has achieved a level of performance. This usually involved developing a system to guide your working practices, and that certain actions are carried out consistently.

Quality standards can also demonstrate that you are meeting regulation requirements, that you are meeting the needs of your users and that you are able to deliver an efficient service. Quality standards can also encourage you to reflect on your performance and improve future delivery.

Approved Quality Standards

Aside from performance management techniques that you can undertake within your own organisation, certain forms of externally approved quality standard can also assist you in managing your performance. There are a number of quality standards available to the sector, and those often used include:

- **ISO 9000 Series.** This is a series of quality management system standards, with a focus on improving your organisation by enabling you to understand your processes for delivering your services to your customers and developing these in a routine format.
- **ISO 14000 Series.** This is a series of environmental management standards, with a focus identifying your environmental impact, continually improve your environmental performance and setting environmental objectives and targets which apply across all areas of organisation activities.
- **PQASSO.** This stands for Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations, and

is often found in the voluntary and community sector. It is a straightforward quality assurance system intended to help organisations run more efficiently, in line with standardised procedures. On completion, organisations are awarded the PQASSO Quality Mark.

- **Investing in Volunteers.** Designed for organisations that utilise the skills of volunteers to supplement their capacity. Standards are a certification model and focus on volunteer management.
- **Community Legal Services Quality Mark.** This is designed for organisations giving legal information and advice to the public. It is a process audited against strict standards, and is awarded against two types of provider; General Help and Specialist Help.
- **VISIBLE Communities Standards.** Seven point standard - Voice, Independent, Service, Initiator, Builder, Local, Engage. Designed for mixed-use community organisations and community organisations that operate community centres, developed by Community Matters. A self-assessment process with optional certification available.
- **Investors in People Standard.** This is a number of frameworks for delivering business improvement through people, by meeting a number of key 'indicators' through a series of multi-point methods appropriate to your organisation and the specific services you offer.

Quality Assurance Policy

It is good practice to develop a quality assurance policy as this will detail your process for ensuring quality standards. This should outline your approach to the management of quality and standards externally and internally. It is beneficial to distribute your quality assurance policy to all your staff and others as appropriate, for example when completing a tender application.