

# **NYON**

**Nottinghamshire  
Youth Organisations' Network**

## **RESEARCH PROJECT INTO QUALITY STANDARDS AND SUPPORT NEEDS**

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**August 2004**

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# NOTTINGHAMSHIRE YOUTH ORGANISATIONS NETWORK

## Research Project into Quality Standards and Support Needs August 2004

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nottinghamshire Youth Organisations Network (NYON) is an infrastructure organisation serving the needs of youth organisations in Nottinghamshire. It has an active membership of just under 100 and a wider mailing list of around 500.

As a result of concerns expressed by members about the implications of the government's thinking as indicated in the "Cross Cutting Review" and the succeeding document "Change Up" (see below), and funders' future requirements for voluntary youth organisations to have some form of quality standards in place, it became necessary to undertake a research project.

#### 1.2 Research Project

NYON approached Williams Consultancy and Training to undertake research into the present practice of monitoring and evaluation by youth organisations in Nottinghamshire and whether there would be a need for training and /or support needs for youth organisations if a more complex structure of quality standards was required as a result of Government initiatives.

Williams Consultancy and Training was established in 1990 to work in and support the voluntary, community and other sectors.

#### 1.3 Government Consultation and Conclusions

- a. In 2004, the Government, through its Active Community Unit, published its consultation on the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure. Section 6 refers to Quality and Standards. This reports that, in general, the Voluntary and Community organisations recognise the need for standards against which to measure the effectiveness of the work done in the sector. However, there was some unease about how quality standards would be assessed and who should do it.
- b. In the following Home Office document "Change Up" – Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector (2004), there are a series

of statements about the “Support Needs of Frontline Organisations”

- c. Performance Improvement states: “New performance improvement advisers should be trained for outreach work and infrastructure organisations should act as clearing houses for skill sharing, mentoring and pro bono opportunities by 2014”
- d. Workforce development and leadership: “Each regional voluntary and community sector network should have a workforce development leader by 2005 and a regional strategy in place by 2006”
- e. Governance: “There should be a framework of competencies and standards in voluntary and community sector governance by 2005”

## **2 PRESENT PROCESSES AVAILABLE FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR STANDARDS GROUPS FOR QUALITY**

- 2.1 There is a great variety of provision for the assessment of quality standards:
  - a. Quality First – author Tony Farley and published in conjunction with Birmingham C.V.S. This self-assessment process is designed for small organisations without paid workers (or with very limited paid support) and most work being done by volunteers.
  - b. PQASSO – Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations- also by Tony Farley and published by the Charities Evaluation Service. This is perhaps the most well known approach to assessing quality standards in the Voluntary Sector. It is thorough and takes organisations through a series of self-assessment processes to reach 3 different levels of competency
  - c. Investors in People – an externally assessed process involving the effectiveness of management and training of employees.
  - d. Matrix – a quality standard around giving advice and guidance for learning and training.
  - e. Legal Services Commission Quality Mark – a requirement of assessment for those groups giving advice and guidance.
  - f. EFQM Excellence Model –a process which develops “an improvement framework” around 9 key criteria to attain “best practice”

- g. Charter Mark- a government award scheme recognising public sector excellence in public service.
  - h. ISO 9000 – geared more towards the private sector but offering a variety of standards through an “integrated quality management philosophy”.
  - i. National Association of Volunteer Bureaux – offer a tailor made Excellence in Volunteer Management Programme for its members
  - j. National and other bodies offer similar programmes but geared to their specific requirements.
- 2.1 The multiplicity of “quality standards” has led to some confusion for the voluntary and community sectors as to which process the sectors should follow.

### 3 RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Because the time line for completion of this piece of work was tight – one month and in the summer holiday period – it was decided that a questionnaire (see below) should be posted to the membership list (96) with a stamped addressed envelope to assist returns. A telephone follow up for those organisations which had not returned the questionnaire, using the membership list, would ask a response to the same questionnaire, but would welcome additional comments about quality standards if volunteered.

3.2 The target was a return of 40

**Actual response was 52: 53% of membership**

3.3 To ensure confidentiality, there was no requirement for members to indicate their organisation for the post returns, but to ensure a spread of groups the telephone follow up would indicate type of organisation – those with paid workers,( generally larger groups) those with little paid support but use of volunteers( generally small groups), Black groups, Asian groups, disability groups and other minority groups.

3.4 Return of questionnaires by post: 32  
Phone response: 20

#### 3.5 Copy of Letter and Questionnaires

see Appendix 3 and 4

#### Research Method (continued)

3.6 There was no intention of asking about the content or process of any particular quality standard, as the purpose

was only to get a snap shot of present monitoring and / or evaluation and the issues that could arise if additional or more involved processes had to be undertaken.

- 3.7 Some quality standards are externally assessed; others are developmental and are internally assessed, so a question was asked about monitoring.
- 3.8 Responses on possible additional Time and Costings, if different standards are required in the future, were asked.
- 3.9 Some Quality Standards processes require training or sustained support to ensure compliance, so a question was asked about what kind of training or support an organisation might need.
- 3.10 Anecdotal evidence would suggest that voluntary organisations monitor and evaluate to the demands of their funders, so a question was asked about funders' approval of evaluation methods.

#### **4 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS**

- 4.1 Results of the questionnaire see Appendix 5

#### **4.2 CONCLUSIONS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE**

- All organisations monitored or evaluated their work with young people in some way
- Most organisations use their own methods for monitoring or evaluating their own work
- Their methods tend to respond to their funders' requirements (see additional comments)
- Most groups are not using an external evaluation system or reaching "Quality marks"
- External monitors are likely to be funders (see additional comments)
- Most groups are concerned about the additional demands on their time if more evaluation is required.
- It is to be noted that around half the organisations do not include their trustees in evaluation/monitoring exercises. Of those who do, 8 acknowledge that their trustees merely receive reports from workers.
- Most workers do the monitoring with information from volunteers.
- **There is a clear indication of training and support needs – both short and long term; particularly from small organisations.**

- There is an acknowledgement of the need for on-going QA
- **Two thirds have not considered the additional costs that might be needed for on-going QA. Others know it will be costly but have not worked it out.**

#### 4.3 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Taken from Questionnaires and phone responses.

##### a) Concerns around Time

- An organisation with a lot of volunteers would have difficulty in finding time to do QA reporting.
- Volunteers are being asked to do more and more – and we are losing them.
- Need funding to do QA effectively and need staff time to coordinate responses into an appropriate form.
- We feel that too much emphasis on assessing quality standards could take people away from work to be done.
- The idea of QA being imposed on us is frightening – we would get less done with our young people.
- Would be more easily done if someone could be appointed and paid to support and develop QA policy – we can't afford anyone to do the finances for us – so no hope for QA.
- We would need extra time – risk assessment already takes up volunteer time - we don't want to lose more volunteers.
- We have no admin support; all our workers are employed on contracts for working with young people, so QA would have to be simple and not time consuming.
- General resourcing for the organisation is difficult enough, no time available for QA.
- Where English is not a first language or where trustees with disabilities need signing for example, additional demands on the organisation of time and support increase.
- 11 Volunteers in our organisation have not joined for work, which takes them away from what they have volunteered to do.

## **b) Monitoring for Funders Needs**

- Well established large organisation with 17 workers (disability)  
QA in a new form would take away initiative – we have too many funders to respond to for monitoring already.
- Play Group: We pay our employees by the hour – we have problems finding funding for that let alone doing the monitoring we are required to do already.
- Reporting to a number of funders is a burden to us - but if time could be bought, it would be useful to look at cause and effect.
- It would be helpful if funders got together and agreed a common process for monitoring instead of funders wanting different information or the same information in a different format.
- Partnerships and networking help to coordinate ideas – would help identify best practice and would help both funders and funded.
- We monitor to funder's requirements – not to our own.

## **c) Concerns around volunteers**

- An organisation with a lot of volunteers would have difficulty in finding time to do QA reporting.
- Volunteers in our organisation have not joined for work which takes them away from what they have volunteered to do.
- Some of our volunteers are resistant to more paper work – find idea of QA intrusive and threatening.
- Youth Group: We tried to develop an assessment process and the volunteers were involved in developing the policy – but then they all resigned because they did not want the responsibility.
- Volunteers are being asked to do more and more – and we are losing them.
- Volunteers don't like anything that takes them away from supporting children.
- There are too many forms to fill in and volunteers don't want the bureaucracy.
- Youth Club for Black Youth: We are run entirely by volunteers and would find additional Quality Assurance systems difficult. Too much admin to do already and no-one



to do it. Paid employees would have to do it but volunteers don't.

- We would need extra time – risk assessment already takes up volunteer time - we don't want to lose more volunteers.
- If we put too much stress on good will and the good work that volunteers do – they will go.

#### **d) Funding and Costs**

- Youth Club: Training is important to develop QA – but who will pay?
- Play group: We pay our employees by the hour – we have problems finding funding for that let alone doing the monitoring we are required to do already.
- Youth Club for Black Youth: We are run entirely by volunteers and would find additional Quality Assurance systems difficult. Too much admin to do already and no-one to do it. Paid employees would have to do it but volunteers don't.
- Local group of a National organisation : We have our own system.

We need QA – but not with too much paper gathering.

We are a large organisation but we still find it difficult - it costs money but we are not always able to cost it out for funding applications.

- After School group (small): We find QA does not encourage good practice and anyway we pay our people by the hour so who is to do it!
- It's not useful to be a small project managed in a large organisation –can't apply for funding on our own and the parent body has not got the flexibility to take on our finances – as a result QA irrelevant.
- Black Youth group: Difficult without an increase in funding to make it happen. Lack of stability in management does not help.
- Need funding to do QA effectively and need staff time to coordinate responses into an appropriate form.
- Would be more easily done if someone could be appointed and paid to support and develop QA policy – we can't afford anyone to do the finances for us – so no hope for QA.

- Reporting to a number of funders is a burden to us - but if time could be bought, it would be useful to look at cause and effect..
- Concentration on Quality Standards means losing actual provision – additional costs - also we need training to do it.
- As we pay our workers by the hour we have no spare money to pay for anything beyond working with the children.
- Once we are used to it, it will be OK – but we need extra funding to do it properly.
- How can we increase workload with QA when we are facing cuts to our service?

#### **e) Additional issues**

- An imposed QA may filter out poor or bad groups but at the same time it could destroy small-dedicated groups who find it too difficult to do on top of what they do already.
- Disability group: we have concern about extra workload for a vulnerable group of trustees with disabilities.
- Play Group: We pay our employees by the hour – we have problems finding funding for that let alone doing the monitoring we are required to do already.
- Youth Club for Black Youth: We are run run entirely by volunteers and would find additional Quality Assurance systems difficult. Too much admin to do already and no-one to do it. Paid employees would have to do it but volunteers don't.
- After School group (small): We find QA does not encourage good practice and anyway we pay our people by the hour so who is to do it!
- Concentration on Quality Standards means losing actual provision – additional costs - also we need training to do it.
- Groups of people with disabilities managed by themselves need additional training support.
- Where English is not a first language or where trustees with disabilities need signing, for example, additional demands on the organisation of time and support increase.

#### **f) General Comments**

**QA is essential to maintain integrity with the public – bottom line.**

- Some of our volunteers are resistant to more paper work – find idea of QA intrusive and threatening.

- There needs to be a sense of proportion about evaluation.
- A large well-organised group with sufficient staff will be OK with the extra work involved.
- Well established large organisation with 17 workers (disability)
  - QA in a new form would take away initiative – we have too many funders to respond to for monitoring already.
- Local group of a National organisation: We have our own system
  - We need QA – but not with too much paper gathering.
  - We are a large organisation but we still find it difficult - it costs money but we are not always able to cost it out for funding applications.
- Models of good practice are thrown at us - but do not encourage organisation to be innovative.
- It's not useful to be a small project managed in a large organisation –can't apply for funding on our own and the parent body has not got the flexibility to take on our finances – as a result QA irrelevant.
- Church Youth Club: Difficult for group to "capture equality" as it happens – how do we know whether we've been successful?
- We are conscious that we are not rigorous enough about finding out about the level of "Quality" in our organisation.
- Community groups would rather be independent than being monitored all the time.
- Concentration on Quality Standards means losing actual provision – additional costs - also we need training to do it
- How do you assess the quality of trust that you hope you are developing in young people!
- The idea of QA being imposed on us is frightening – we would get less done with our young people.
- It would be good to have an external assessment every now and again – would encourage fresh thinking – but not more paperwork!
- Once we are used to it, it will be OK – but we need extra funding to do it properly.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS**

- Most groups are not using a recognised Quality Assurance system
- Most groups monitor only to funders' needs. Organisations with multiple funding strands find it time consuming to provide different monitoring information.
- Any change in Evaluation processes would require more time to do it.
- Most small organisations and some larger ones say that the collection of evidence would take workers and volunteers away from the real business of working with young people.
- Small organisations with few if any paid workers say that volunteers, who are increasingly difficult to find, will give up volunteering if it means more paperwork and less work with young people.
- Most groups realise that if Quality Assurance is to be taken seriously and done properly, organisations will need both short term training and particularly long term support for it to be worthwhile and effective.
- Costings of both time in general and worker time in particular will have to be realistic and made available through funding applications as part of core costs.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 5.1 NYON seeks funding for a minimum of two full-time development workers to implement a training programme for Quality Assurance over the next 3 years with youth groups in Nottinghamshire.
- 5.2 NYON asks the National and Regional funding bodies network to find a common and flexible approach to the monitoring and quality assurance demands they make on those organisations that they fund.

- 5.3 NYON asks the National and Regional funding bodies to allow realistic “core costs” in funding applications to enable applicants to manage their projects as well as monitor and evaluate their success.
- 5.4 NYON asks the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services to undertake a national survey to identify the difficulties for those organisations involved in youth work with mainly or only volunteers.

**Appendix 1****LIST OF PHONE CONTACTS BY TYPE OF YOUTH GROUP.**

All respondents were Youth Leaders or Managers. Only one trustee replied to a phone call.

Asian Women's group (large)

Asian Youth group (small)

Youth Club for Black youth (small)

Inner City Youth group (small)

Neighbourhood Youth Centre (inner City)

Inner City Inclusion project (large)

Church Youth Club (County)

Youth ex-offenders project (large)

Sea Cadets (part of National body)

Disability Support (large)

Play Forum (County)

Church group (County)

Youth Club (Broxtowe)

Sports Club (Inner City)

Refugee and Asylum Group (City)

Out of School Club (County)

Disability Group (Mansfield)

Disability group (small)

Youth group (small - north Notts)

Health Project for Young People (Large – City and County)

20 groups

## Appendix 2

Regional views were also sought to obtain an overview from a Regional perspective

### IEWS FROM OTHER AGENCIES AND STATUTORY BODIES

#### Connexions – Nottinghamshire

- There may be a concern around whether one Quality Assurance process fits all.
- There needs to be a flexibility of any assessment process to ensure volunteers are involved and not put off - a system needs to be simple
- Complex QA can be a barrier for volunteers if too demanding
- There is an obvious need for finance to buy time, training and support.
- Lack of QA can be a difficulty for some funding applications.

#### Derbyshire Learning and Development Consortium

- We work with PQASSO and IIP though we find PQASSO more useful with the voluntary sector
- Some small organisations have signed up for PQASSO but underestimated the time and the amount of work and have not maintained interest.
- Where organisations are run by volunteers, there are problems getting them to sign up to it because of workload
- Some organisations refuse to do it at all.
- The voluntary sector has difficulties because of fluctuating volunteers and staffing particularly with short term funding and contracts
- Additionally, where there is part time staff, there is less likelihood of a coherent approach.

## Nottinghamshire Youth Division

- Generally, the large groups, particularly those affiliated to National organisations, work within QA.
- There is a concern about small groups working with just volunteers or parents
- These groups have other training needs – eg around Health and Safety, Child Protection before QA.

## **Appendix 2 continued**

### **Leicester Youth VIS**

- QA can be supported by more working together and networking – though this may be easier in conurbations rather in rural areas.
- Youth groups will find QA easier by having membership of National bodies who have the capacity to assist local groups.
- Funders are intending to network more closely in order to have greater consensus around funding applications and monitoring . The Youth section of
- the voluntary sector would benefit from this.
- 

### **Voluntary Action Leicester**

- Leicester City Council has been concerned to require QA as a requirement for funding applications from voluntary sector groups.
- Many groups found this too difficult but since the City Council has required as a minimum, a start on QA, the voluntary sector has gained confidence and is complying.
- Some groups find QA a bit of a straight jacket, but everyone agrees that there needs to be some QA system.
- Some trustees need support as do small organisations with volunteers.





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Appendix 3

Tuesday, 13 July  
2004

Dear Colleague,

**NYON is undertaking some research amongst its members about the current use of any form of Quality Standards.**

In the Home Office report "Change Up – Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector" (2004), it states

- 1 There should be a framework of competencies and standards in voluntary and community sector governance by 2005
- 2 A commonly branded local volunteer infrastructure, linked to the achievement of quality standards, should be in place by 2005

The Cross Cutting review recognised the need of the voluntary sector to access appropriate support but at the same time is demanding a more coherent approach to delivering quality services.

NYON is collecting data –**which is confidential** – about the current use of Quality Standards if any and the potential training or support needs to achieve them amongst its membership.

This information will be used to support the implementation of Quality Standards across the Voluntary Youth Sector as a whole.

NYON would be grateful if you could find the time to fill in this brief questionnaire and return it by post in the enclosed stamped envelope to the above address.

Thank you for your time in filling in the form

Yours sincerely,

Stephanie Hudson  
Director of NYON

## Appendix 4

### NYON RESEARCH INTO QUALITY STANDARDS AND SUPPORT NEEDS

Please indicate your reply by ticking the appropriate box

Quality standards	No	Yes
<b>1 Does your organisation monitor and evaluate its work?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Do you use your own evaluation methods?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do your funders approve your evaluation methods?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Do you use a process like PQASSO or Quality First?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Are you reaching a recognised quality mark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Are you working towards a recognised quality mark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Do you have an external monitor of your standard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Does your evaluation method take too much time away from your main activity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 If you changed your quality evaluation to a nationally accepted standard (eg PQASSO), do you think it would take up more time than you have available to do it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Appendix 5

What support or training needs does your organisation have?

		No	Yes
1	<b>Are your trustees involved in assessing your quality standards?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<b>Are paid workers involved in assessing your quality Standards?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<b>Are volunteers involved in assessing your quality standards?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Do your trustees, workers, and volunteers (if any), need external support to undertake assessing quality standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Would they need training to help them understand the quality process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Would they need a longer period of support from a trainer to ensure understanding of the process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Does your organisation understand that undertaking a quality assessment is an ongoing process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Have you considered the financial cost of undertaking an ongoing quality standard assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you would like to add any other comments, please do so below

## Questionnaire Results

### NYON RESEARCH INTO QUALITY STANDARDS AND SUPPORT NEEDS

Quality standards		No	Yes	
N/A	Don't			
				Know
<b>1</b>	<b>Does your organisation monitor and evaluate its work?</b>	<b>[ 0 ]</b>	<b>[ 52 ]</b>	
<b>[ 0 ]</b>	<b>[ 0 ]</b>			
2	Do you use your own evaluation methods?	[ 5 ]	[ 47 ]	
	[ 0 ] [ 0 ]			
3	Do your funders approve your evaluation methods?	[ 15 ]	[ 36 ]	
	[ 0 ] [ 1 ]			
4	Do you use a process like PQASSO or Quality First?	[ 34 ]	[ 16 ]	
	[ 0 ] [ 1 ]			
5	Are you reaching a recognised quality mark?	[ 33 ]	[ 18 ]	
	[ 0 ] [ 1 ]			
6	Are you working towards a recognised quality mark?	[ 32 ]	[ 20 ]	
	[ 0 ] [ 0 ]			
7	Do you have an external monitor of your standard?	[ 27 ]	[ 25 ]	
	[ 0 ] [ 0 ]			
8	Does your evaluation method take too much time away from your main activity?	[ 7 ]	[ 19 ]	[ 0 ]
	[ 6 ]			
9	If you changed your quality evaluation to a nationally accepted standard (eg PQASSO), do you think it would take up more time than you have available to do it?	[ 4 ]	[ 35 ]	[ 5 ]
	[ 8 ]			
What support or training needs does your organisation have?		No	Yes	N/A
	Don't			
				Know

6	<b>Are your trustees involved in assessing your quality standards?</b>	[ 1 ]	[ 0 ]	[ 25 ]	[ 26 ]
7	<b>Are paid workers involved in assessing your quality Standards?</b>	[ 44 ]	[ 1 ]	[ 0 ]	[ 6 ]
8	<b>Are volunteers involved in assessing your quality standards?</b>	[ 1 ]	[ 0 ]	[ 14 ]	[ 37 ]
9	Do your trustees, workers, and volunteers (if any), need external support to undertake assessing quality standards?	[ 0 ]	[ 0 ]	[ 10 ]	[ 42 ]
10	Would they need training to help them understand the quality process?	[ 0 ]	[ 0 ]	[ 10 ]	[ 42 ]
6 [ 0 ]	Would they need a longer period of support from a trainer to ensure understanding of the process?	[ 3 ]		[ 18 ]	[ 31 ]
7	Does your organisation understand that undertaking a quality assessment is an ongoing process?	[ 0 ]	[ 0 ]	[ 4 ]	[ 38 ]
8	Have you considered the financial cost of undertaking an ongoing quality standard assessment?	[ 4 ]		[ 31 ]	[ 17 ] [ 0 ]
<b>Total of 52 replies but not all questions were completed</b>					

**References:**

- 1.3 a Home Office: The Crosscutting Review of the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery (2004)
- 1.3 b Home Office: Active Communities – Change Up Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector (2004)

This document was produced on behalf of

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