Connecting Advice In Dorset

Version 1, December 2014

Guide to Quality Standards for voluntary sector organisations with an advice remit

This guide has been developed to help advice organisations in Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole identify the key indicators of a quality service, and access sources of help for developing appropriate systems, policies and procedures. It uses standard 'quality areas' that are found in a number of Quality Mark systems such as the Advice Quality Standard, PQASSO. ISO 9001. It is intended as an overview only. A summary of relevant Quality Marks can be found at http://www.caidorset.org.uk/doku.php?id=astf:lans

Quality Area	What does this cover? and Why is it important?	How can you demonstrate this
1.Service Description	A clear demonstration of what your organisation is set up to do, its aims and objectives. For charitable status this must be 'charitable for the public benefit'.	This may be in your governing document – constitution, Memorandum and Articles of Association or Trust Deed. You may also have a Mission Statement. It may also be stated in publicity about your services including on your website.
	Useful links: Charity commission guidance with templates for the main types of organisation (eg. CIO - Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charitable Company, Charitable Trust) AND lots of other guidance eg. on 'charitable purpose', governance, etc. www.gov.uk/running-charity/setting-up	
2. Meeting the needs of your community	**What/Why:** You have to be able to show there is a need that you meet either for an identified group of people and/or a geographical area.	**How:** A Community Profile brings together data about your area (geographic OR target group). This should clearly show why there is a need for the work you do. For advice agencies it feeds into an Advice Needs Analysis.
	Useful links: Examples of Community Profiles can be found on the internet. Data can be obtained from the Office for National Statistic and district/ward profiles on local authority websites. www.ons.gov.uk The Lottery has useful guidance on identifying need: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/applying-for-funding/identifying-need/help-defining-need	

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<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">More general analysis of social need is available on sites such as:
Joseph Rowntree Foundation: www.jrf.org.uk
New Economics Foundation: www.neweconomics.org</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">3. Management Structure</td><td>What/Why: This ensure you and others (eg funders) know how your organisation is organised both in terms of strategic direction and overall accountability (your Trustee Board or Management Committee) and a staff team running the day-to-day operations.</td><td>How:
• Clear role descriptions (for paid staff, volunteers and trustees) – who is responsible for what?
• Organisational diagram
• Terms of reference for your Board and any sub-committees and short-term ’working groups’</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Useful links:
Charity Commission: www.gov.uk/trustee-board-people-and-skills
ACEVO: www.acevo.org.uk/advice-support/governance Publications available –at a price
KnowHow NonProfit: knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/orgdev/structure-and-culture/structure</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">4. Planning your service</td><td>What/Why: A plan sets out the overall strategic direction of your organisation ideally over the next 3 years, with a more detailed plan of the current year that is reviewed by your Board quarterly.</td><td>How: ‘Business Plan’ is the general term, and should include a description of the service, threats and opportunities, resources. It may include an Action Plan in table format (particularly for the current year) – what is to be done when by whom and with what resources. Also includes monitoring (when by whom) and measurement – how will you know something has been achieved.
Be clear about the definitions of:
Outputs – your products, services, activities
Outcomes – the change that happens as a result of your work
Impact –the broader and/or longer-term effects of your work</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Useful links:
○ General info on sites such as Knowhow Nonprofit (part of NCVO): http://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/strategy/strategy
○ Information and support available from our local ‘CVS’ organisations;
www.dorsetcommunityaction,org.uk
www.poolecvs.org.uk</td></tr>
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<td colspan="2">www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk Start up guidance and model polices on website –eg:.
www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk/documents/BCVSGettingStartedPack2014.pdf
○ Downloadable business plan templates at:
www.smallcharities.org.uk/fileadmin/user/Events/Past/Link_up_and_learn/Liverpool/BusinessPlanTemplate-_Brian_Seaton.pdf and:
www.governancecode.org
○ Monitoring and evaluation: see Charities Evaluation Service:
www.ces-vol.org.uk/about-performance-improvement/about-monitoring-evaluation/planning-for-monitoring-evaluation/outcomes/outputs-outcomes
www.ces-vol.org.uk/about-performance-improvement/about-monitoring-evaluation/planning-for-monitoring-evaluation/outcomes/outcomes-impact</td>
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<td rowspan="2">5. Publicising your service</td>
<td>What/Why: Do people know what you do?
• If your service targets specific groups or is only accessed via referrals, then key staff in other agencies need to know this. See also referrals - section 7.
• If you run an ‘open door’ service: clear information about the service, when and how to access it, what clients can expect, any cost implications.
• Publicising news to keep your organisation in the public eye and/or responding to things that have happened - eg a local or national policy that affects your clients.</td>
<td>How: Communications Strategy – may include:
• Clear and consistent branding: logo + mission or strapline on all publicity.
• Info for the public: posters, leaflets, websites, inclusion in other organisations’ information.
• Procedure for dealing with the media: who can respond to a media request? etc
• Management team and trustees aware of political impartiality.</td>
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<td colspan="2">Useful links:
○ Step by step guide on KnowHow NonProfit:
www.knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/effective-communications-1/communications-strategy
○ Charity Commission guidance on political impartiality:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-cc9</td>
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<td rowspan="2">6. How accessible is your service to users, volunteers and staff?</td>
<td>What/Why: All organisations need clear statements on Equal Opportunities, both for how people can access the service, and for your team. This meets the relevant legislation and makes good business sense.</td>
<td>How:
• Equal Opportunities Policies
• Access Statements</td>
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<td colspan="2">Useful links:
○ Dorset Race Equality Council can offer a free Equality Audit of your organisation: www.dorsetrec.co.uk
○ Guidance templates and other links on KnowHow NonProfit:
knowhownonprofit.org/people/employment-law-and-hr/policies-and-templates/equalopps
○ Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com
○ Charity Commission guidance on the ‘charities’ exception’ which allows charities to discriminate by limiting the group of people they it work with:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance-for-charities/equality-act-guidance-for-charities</td>
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<td rowspan="2">7. Working with others</td>
<td>What/Why: Covers both how you signpost and refer people to other services (a ‘seamless service’ for clients) and how you work in partnership with other organisations. Networking with other agencies demonstrates you are contributing to wider developments in your community and not working in a ‘silo’.</td>
<td>How:
• Signposting and referral procedures.
• Referral ‘form’ (paper or electronic).
• List of other agencies for clients with explanation of criteria used for inclusion on this.
• Make contact with other agencies by joining relevant fora.
• Joint work on wider strategic issues can be evidenced from notes/minutes of partnership meetings you have been represented at.</td>
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<td colspan="2">Useful links:
Connecting Advice in Dorset – guide to good practice in referrals:
www.caidorset.org.uk/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=astf:guide_to_referrals_between_advice_organisations_-_draft_v2.pdf

Join/keep in touch with relevant networks via our local CVS organisations (see 4 above) and other for a</td>
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<td>8. Financial controls</td>
<td>What/Why: Robust procedures ensure that money you receive is spent and accounted for appropriately and that financial risks are avoided. It also protects your</td>
<td>How:
• Written financial procedures.
• Quarterly management accounts tabled for Board</td>
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	trustees. This is crucial for your reputation , and if you are seeking funding from local authorities, Lottery, trusts.	meetings with written commentary. • Annual budget prepared before start of new financial year and approved by Board. • Annual accounts prepared in line with Charity Commission Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). • Reserves Policy which includes an amount for controlled closing-down period if needed. • Funding applications include amounts for overheads calculated on ' full cost recovery' basis.
	Useful links: ○ Charity Commission guidance: www.gov.uk/running-charity/money-accounts ○ New SORP from 1 January 2015: www.charitiessorp.org/ ○ Full Cost Recovery: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/full-cost-recovery [not all funders will accept this but the Lottery's guidance is very useful, plus there is a spreadsheet to calculate FCR]	
9. Your team	**What/Why:** Support, supervision and training for staff (paid and volunteer) demonstrates that your team can deliver the service, and are valued and able to progress.	**How:** • Job and Role descriptions – being clear not to create an employer-employee relationship with volunteers. • Written description of support and supervision processes. • Clear induction process for new staff. • Regular one-to-ones with staff, possibly involving feedback on recent cases ('file review'). • Regular team meetings with notes circulated. • Training needs analysis. • Training programme and opportunities publicised to staff regularly. • Money allocated to training in annual budget.
	Useful links: ○ Charity Commission guides include:	

	www.gov.uk/how-to-manage-your-charitys-volunteers www.gov.uk/charity-staff-how-to-employ-paid-workers ○ KnowHow NonProfit: knowhownonprofit.org/people/staff/managing-staff	
10. Information Assurance issues	**What/Why:** If you are handling personal or sensitive data your clients, employees and funders need to be sure you are able to keep data safe, and understand the requirements of legislation in this area.	**How:** Check if you need to register with the Information Commissioner; if YES you will need to: • Have procedures on Data Protection and Information Assurance. • Allocate roles to key members of your team, with the Board taking overall responsibility, and a trustee designated Information Accounting Officer. • Ensure staff do annual training relevant to their role. • Draw up an Information Asset Register. • Draw up a Risk Assessment and what to do if data is lost. • Implement a Data Sharing Agreement if you are sharing data with partners.
	Useful links: Information Commissioner's Office - check if you need to register (£35 per year) www.ico.org.uk More detailed guidance: ico.org.uk/for_organisations/sector_guides/charity Useful powerpoint overview: ico.org.uk/news/events/previous_events/~/media/documents/library/Corporate/Research_and_reports/ico-presentation-20140624-Cheshire-East-CAB-2-July-2014-Andy-Rose2.pdf	
11. Client/User feedback	**What/Why:** You need to know if your service is meeting clients' needs – what suggestions do clients have for changes/improvements? This evidence can help in funding applications. You also need to have a clear process for accepting and dealing with complaints. Feedback and complaints should be monitored regularly by the board and lead to reviewing	**How:** Processes for collecting comments, complaints, compliments and specific feedback. • Suggestions 'box' (physical or virtual). • Feedback surveys (can be done in various ways). • Complaints procedure. • Complaints poster/leaflet.

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Reports on all these that go to the Board - clear actions implemented to develop/improve services as a result of feedback.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Useful links:
Involving beneficiaries: knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/strategy/beneficiaries/eighttips
Model complaints policy: www.governancecode.org/useful-resources/principle-6-openness-and-accountability/</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">12. Specific issues if you are giving advice</td><td>What/Why: Information given must be up-to-date, reliable, accurate and complete; advice must be appropriate and effective. You need to be sure about the definitions:
Information is generic
Advice personalises information
Casework means you take on responsibility for progressing the client’s situation
Advocacy is similar but with more emphasis on helping clients make their voice heard.</td><td>How:
Written procedures for giving information and advice.
Staff understand their remit and boundaries eg. triage only, full advice etc.
Use reliable sources of information – recognised websites and books which are regularly updated.
Case recording system covers: client’s situation, options available, advice used, actions agreed.
Some organisations have a system for confirming advice given in a follow-up letter.
Other advice-related systems such as diary system for recording key dates, reviews etc.
Supervision of advisers, case checking of advice – see Advice Quality Standard link below.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Useful links:
If advice-giving is a key part of your work you will find useful guidance on how to quality control advice at: www.advicequalitystandard.org.uk
For up-to-date information on a wide range of topics go to www.adviceguide.org.uk
Child Poverty Action Group produces very useful handbooks on benefits, fuel poverty, child maintenance etc; revised annually with in-year updates: www.cpag.org.uk
For health/ care information the NHS has introduced The Information Standard: www.england.nhs.uk/tis/</td></tr>
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13. Other issues	You will need: • Employer's Liability Insurance if you have any employees. • Public Liability Insurance if you are running any events that members of the public attend. • Safeguarding Policies if working with children or 'vulnerable adults' www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-policy-protecting-vulnerable-adults • Health and Safety Policy www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/managing/writing.htm You may also need: ○ Lone Working Policy ○ Home Working Policy ○ Organisational Risk Assessment/Contingency Plan ○ IT strategy

A note on websites: most of the links above are to clearly recognised and validated websites such as the Charity Commission, Big Lottery, KnowHow NonProfit which is part of NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) , Charity Evaluation Services and our local 'Council for Voluntary Service' (CVS) organisations. Occasionally there are links that have just come up on a 'google search'. Please note, any website used should be checked and verified as far as possible; also information will change or be updated regularly , so the links above are intended for GUIDANCE ONLY.

Vs 1: December 2014/***Caroline Buxton*** caroline@caidorset.org.uk

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Citizens Advice in Dorset
The charity for our community
in partnership with:
Shelter
Ansbury
Quality Careers Advice and Guidance
Part of Continuum Consortium
Dorset Race Equality Council
citizens advice bureau
BIG LOTTERY FUND
LOTTERY FUNDED