

# South Yorkshire Quality Project Phase 2 Evaluation Report



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## Executive Summary

In November / December 2008 Icarus undertook an independent evaluation of the South Yorkshire Quality Project (SYQP) for the period between July 2007 and October 2008, Phase 2 of its operations. The evaluation sought to establish the extent to which the project has achieved its aim and objectives, and to examine the quality of delivery and impact of its work. The findings are intended to inform the future development of services.

The SYQP was developed to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social economy organisations through offering support and training in the implementation of appropriate quality assurance systems, as a tool for organisational development in all aspects of their work – including responsiveness to customers, HR management, financial management and equal opportunities practice. Phase 2 commenced in September 2006, but final agreement with Objective 1 was only reached in July 2007.

SYQP was managed by Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS), and working in partnership with Voluntary Action Barnsley (VAB) and Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), with funding totalling £199,187 from Yorkshire Forward and Objective 1. A cost per group analysis suggests that it has provided good value for money, comparable with Phase 1.

Four part time Quality Development Officers (QDOs) were employed and hosted in the infrastructure organisations, with a project manager and administrator located at VAS. The project was made up of a number of related activities. QDOs worked with social economy groups to produce a quality action plan and to pursue a relevant quality award – primarily focusing on PQASSO. In addition, groups could access training on quality awards and various aspects of performance improvement. Further activities included virtual networking via the Quality Network, and meetings of the Quality Forum and Quality Practitioners' Network.

The gap between project inception and confirmation had serious implications for the project. The delivery of targets was compressed into a shorter period of time, and partners became disengaged from the project as protracted negotiations continued. Partnership working has proved complex in these circumstances, exacerbated by additional

factors such as staff changes and period of absence / sickness. However, despite these difficulties SYQP has been successful in delivering its targets.

64 social economy groups have received 35 hours of support from the project, and this is a significant achievement. There have been challenges in meeting these targets; 35 hours is a significant commitment, but many groups would prefer more QDO input as a general lack of time and resources has been a major obstacle for many in pursuing quality improvements.

The role of QDOs has been highly valued by groups, in de-mystifying quality and quality awards, providing a framework and process for self assessment, and giving access to resources and expertise. QDOs have made good use of specialist skills and knowledge within their host organisations and have made this available to groups as required. It is this intensive level of support that groups require; where a more 'hands off' approach has been applied it has proved less useful.

SYQP has developed quality assurance skills and expertise in the sector. Individual members of staff understand more about quality assurance systems, about their own group's needs in this respect, and about how to move forward on performance improvement. What is less clear is the extent to which this knowledge base is embedded within organisations rather than individuals; groups commonly express difficulties in getting broad ownership from staff and trustees, and in resourcing quality work sufficiently.

The project has taken place over a period of massive change in the sector, including a much stronger emphasis on commissioning and procurement. Many groups have therefore been driven to pursue a quality award to improve their chances of securing contracts with the public sector, rather than from any sense of the intrinsic value of a quality assurance system.

However, as groups embark on a period of self assessment, producing quality action plans, and investigating quality awards, they do start to recognise the wider benefits, including; improved customer service; better supported and

efficient staff; improved confidence; increased legal compliance; and easier access to information to support funding bids. These are all notable successes and suggest that groups can be more effective and sustainable into the future.

The provision of training for groups has been something of a mixed success for the project. While courses have been rated as Good or Excellent by over 90% of attendees, they have been poorly attended. A number of factors have contributed to this lack of take up, but it is clear that where training is firmly embedded within a project, then it is more likely to be a success – there is a sense that this has not been the case here.

SYQP maintained three networks. The only electronic network was the Quality Network, established as an e-mail network of all those interested in quality. In practice it has remained an information bulletin rather than an opportunity to genuinely network and exchange experiences and knowledge, and is therefore of little value to groups. The two face-to-face networks have had more success, although both groups and practitioners struggle to find the time to attend and attendance has waned. What is clear is that there is an ongoing need for both parties to access information, skills and expertise, and these elements need to be part of a project such as this.

An overall analysis suggests that the SYQP Phase 2 has been successful in meeting its targets, and in working sub regionally, despite difficult operating circumstances. It is clear that there are still unmet needs, indeed with needs growing as the procurement / commissioning agenda is more firmly established. There is real scope for continuing work to further support groups engaged in quality awards and performance improvement, to engage new groups, and to bear influence at a strategic level on quality issues.

## 1. Introduction

### Background to this report

The report presents the findings of the evaluation of the second phase of the South Yorkshire Quality Project's (SYQP) work, for the period between July 2007 and October 2008, and undertaken by Icarus. The project is due for final completion on 31 March 2009.

The overall aim of the evaluation has been to provide an assessment of how far the project has achieved its aim and objectives in Phase 2, and to examine the quality of delivery and the impact of its work. The findings are intended to inform the future development of services.

The purpose of this report is to provide evaluative feedback on these key tasks.

### Using this report

A great deal of data has been collected during the evaluation process, and that is not replicated here. Instead, this report serves as a concise summary and analysis of that information, in the following format:

- **the headlines:** the notable project successes and challenges the project faced
- **the findings:** the collated summary of the information gathered by the evaluator
- **key points:** noting the points arising from the findings and their implications for future delivery (be that for a phase 3 of the SYQP or in other sub regional initiatives developed by the partner organisations)

The report findings are structured into the 2 principle areas this evaluation has focused on – **project structure and management** and **the impact of the project**.

### **1.3 Background to the South Yorkshire Quality Project**

The SYQP was developed to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social economy organisations through offering support and training in the implementation of appropriate quality assurance systems, as a tool for organisational development in all aspects of their work – including responsiveness to customers, HR management, financial management and equal opportunities practice.

Social economy organisations are those in the voluntary and community sector that are not wholly grant dependent and generate a proportion of their income from other sources.

A quality assurance system is a structured way of assessing an organisation's current performance and identifying areas for improvement. It sets out the expectations that a quality organisation should fulfil, and is intended to raise standards and ensure consistency.

The SYQP is a sub regional programme of work, managed by Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) and working in partnership with Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) and Voluntary Action Barnsley (VAB). These three organisations are the main local infrastructure organisations for the voluntary and community sectors in their respective constituencies.

Funding for the project has been from Objective 1 and Yorkshire Forward (the Regional Development Agency) through the South Yorkshire Investment Plan. Phase 2 commenced in September 2006 and additional funding was sought from Objective 1 to strengthen the overall project depth and coverage; an extensive period of delay followed until final agreement was reached in July 2007. Work did continue over this period, including activities that reflected Objective 1 outputs, although on an 'at risk' basis until confirmation of the funding, and with a high degree of uncertainty about the future for all partners.

The specific project objectives for Phase 2 were:

- To develop skills and expertise in the process of quality assurance self assessment, especially amongst managers / potential managers and trustees in the voluntary and community sector
- To raise awareness of quality assurance systems and their potential benefits among social economy organisations
- To support social economy organisations in successfully implementing a quality assurance system
- To co-ordinate management training activities arising from needs identified through this process, and thus contribute to workforce and organisational development
- To establish and maintain e-mail networks of quality 'champions' and governance practitioners to share information, good practice and evaluation
- To monitor and evaluate the programme, and disseminate the findings among social economy organisations and funders

Groups eligible for support through the project had to meet two specific criteria:

- A 'social economy' check that initially required them to generate 25% of their income from sources other than grant aid (this target was later amended to a level of 10% [or to demonstrate an intention to earn this amount within the next accounting year])
- A willingness to commit to 35 hours of support from the SYQP

Groups supported by the project were encouraged to develop quality action plans and to explore achieving a relevant quality award. This focused primarily on PQASSO although groups were encouraged to adopt the quality award most relevant to their needs. A team of four part time dedicated Quality Development Officers (QDOs) provided support to the groups, based in Sheffield, Rotherham and Barnsley, with additional specialist support provided via trainers and consultants.

Each of the QDOs was hosted and line managed by their local organisation – Voluntary Action Sheffield, Voluntary Action Rotherham and Voluntary Action Barnsley. In addition, a project manager and administrator were based at Voluntary Action Sheffield.

Much of the work of the project has concentrated on the one to one support of individual groups. Further activities with groups include training events, virtual networking via the Quality Network (QualityNet), and meetings of the Quality Forum, and Quality Practitioners' Network (QPNET).

Objective 1 and Yorkshire Forward have provided the funding for the SYQP, totalling £199,187. Their relative priorities have led to different targets:

*For Yorkshire Forward –*

- skills development: 6 hours per individual (130)
- business support: 2 hours per group (85)

*For Objective 1 –*

- businesses assisted (64)
- network / supply chain initiatives (3)

## **2. The Evaluation Process**

### **2.1 Evaluation methodology**

Icarus was appointed in November 2008 to develop and apply an evaluation framework for the SYQP. A standard set of evaluation questions was devised and applied (see Appendix 1), using the following methods:

- Interviews with team members (administrator, QDOs, line managers and programme manager)
- Postal questionnaire to groups supported by the project
- Interviews with a sample of groups supported by the project
- E-mail questionnaire to Quality Network members
- E-mail questionnaire to Quality Practitioners' Network members
- Desk based research – meeting minutes, internal evaluation, project development plan etc.

Since Icarus also undertook the evaluation of the project's Phase 1, it has been possible to ensure consistency of approach and overlap of evaluation questions between the two.

### **2.2 Research limitations**

While the evaluator has no doubt that the findings in this report are both robust and valuable, it is worth recording that there have been limitations to the evaluation research which impact on the depth and quality of results in places:

- Poor response rates to questionnaires and to the request for telephone interviews with groups
- Summative evaluation: the lack of an evaluation framework for the duration of the project means that evaluation data has not been routinely collected in a consistent fashion – as a result this report represents a snapshot rather than a comprehensive review of progress over time

- Resourcing: the evaluation has taken place over a short period of time and with limited resources, impacting on the scope for data collection and analysis

### 3. Project Structure and Management

#### 3.1 Introductory comments

This section is split into a number of areas of interest that have been the focus of the evaluation. The main findings are summarised for each area, the key issues are highlighted and the learning for future delivery is outlined.

#### 3.2 Project goals

**Headline highlights:** *Objective 1 outputs achieved: 64 groups received 35 hours of support*

**Headline challenges:** *Poor project definition, unrealistic criteria*

At the time the inception of Phase 2 of the SYQP, a comprehensive set of objectives was in place to guide progress and these do reflect the project's work to a significant degree.

The outputs agreed with and / or required by the funders have created some difficulties for the project however, and have resulted in misunderstandings about eligibility, delays and ultimately re-negotiation with Objective 1. Specifically, those difficulties have been as follows.

- i) The 'social economy' eligibility: after a long period of negotiation with Objective 1 it was agreed that the project would work with groups that generated 25% of their income from sources other than grant aid (defined as income from contracts, service level agreements, investment income, or income from promotional or fundraising events). It quickly became clear that this was not achievable and early work was hampered by firstly trying to find groups that met this criteria and secondly in spending time re-negotiating with Objective 1. This figure was amended to a more realistic level of 10%, and groups committed to working towards it or already attaining it.

- ii) The 35 hour requirement: the project's funding was awarded on the basis that each group would receive 35 hours of support. However, what this support could or should entail was not established at the outset and QDOs were initially unclear about what time they could record and whether this output driven approach would result in meeting the needs of all groups (because some need more support time than others), despite Phase 1's success in working with groups for 30 hours.
- iii) 64 groups: the goal was a very optimistic target of working with 64 groups, providing each with 35 hours of support. At even the crudest level of analysis this was an extremely challenging aspiration given the staff resource available over the project period, particularly exacerbated by protracted period of staff sickness / absence, and the delays in getting the project up and running.
- iv) Claiming groups: difficulties were encountered in recording and claiming Yorkshire Forward outputs because different parts of the host organisations were working with the same groups as the Quality Project.

Together these issues have conspired to slow progress and impact on team members' individual and collective confidence. This was particularly true in the early stages of implementation when a dedicated project manager at VAS had not been recruited.

It is not unusual to observe this kind of picture at the start of a new programme of work, but this was a Phase 2 project (albeit revised from its first incarnation) and a smoother transition might have been expected. What is clear is that in hindsight the targets and outputs are most obviously challenging and clearly 'wrong footed' the team to a significant degree. Re-negotiation where necessary took time, as did internal agreements about factors such as recording processes and unpacking what the 35 hour commitment meant in practice. Most significantly the absence of real continuity in the project led to considerable time pressures, a lack of momentum, and difficulties in keeping partners fully engaged.

The outputs were ultimately achieved, and in a variety of ways. Together with the one to one work with individual groups, support has been made available via networking events, e-mail networks and training. In addition there has been work with VCS consortia in Sheffield concerned with procurement. They have benefited from a quality workshop and follow up support in the form of standard policies and procedures relevant to their identified needs and current issues.

The project has monitored its activities to assess its delivery of these outputs and has required the groups it has supported to complete a simple evaluation form at the end of the QDO involvement. While this is an improvement on the data collected for Phase 1, it is disappointing that monitoring has not captured evidence against all the objectives, and that it been output focused and has not routinely collected evidence about the impact of the project's work. While the output of a new policy or procedure is valuable to a group, what that doesn't do is provide any sense of how the work of the group in delivering services to its beneficiaries can be transformed when the back office functions perform smoothly.

What is clear is that the project has been hampered by poor project definition, a combination of externally driven pressures and partners' agreement to those terms. It is a credit to the team that they have achieved their targets while responding to difficult operating circumstances, making complex decisions about delivery methods and working hard to provide a quality and valuable service to groups.

Key issues

| Key points  | Learning for future delivery  |
|---|---|
| The SYQP has been affected by poor project definition. Challenging targets were agreed with funders, and attention had not been paid to defining what those targets meant in practice and how they would or could meet the needs of | i. Projects should not be too anxious to agree unacceptable targets with funders. The targets / outputs should reflect both funders' and beneficiary needs and should be clearly defined from the outset. |

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| <p>groups.</p> <p>A monitoring and evaluation framework was not developed for this project. While evidence relating to the outputs has been collected, other information about impact has not been routinely sought in a consistent fashion. It is likely that this has resulted in the loss of what might have proved to be useful data.</p> <p>The project has successfully achieved its outputs, but at a different pace than anticipated.</p> <p>The project has demonstrated flexibility and has adapted its practice to reflect changes in the operating context.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. All projects should develop a monitoring and evaluation framework at the same time as agreeing their aims and objectives. It is therefore possible to establish appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems and procedures at the outset that integrate easily into the project's day to day work. An outcomes based approach would be particularly useful for a project such as this.</li> <li>iii. Projects need absolute clarity about how to evidence their outputs – funders need to provide clear guidance about what outputs mean and what can be measured, particularly where groups may be supported by different funding streams.</li> <li>iv. Flexibility is an inherent strength in projects – as long as there are checks and balances to ensure that changes are necessary and the project has not lost sight of its purpose.</li> </ul> |
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### 3.3 Partnership arrangements

**Headline highlights:** *Collective, sub regional programme of work delivered*

**Headline challenges:** *Difficult management arrangements*

Voluntary Action Sheffield has acted as accountable body for the SYQP, and partnership arrangements with VAR and VAB have been embodied in a memorandum of agreement between the parties. This clearly establishes the rights and responsibilities of the three organisations in relation to the project together with a disputes process.

In practice the relationship between the three key management personnel has not always been positive. While all have worked hard to ensure the project delivers what it set out to do there is a sense that VAS is ultimately the lead and that the others will follow, a situation that has not always sat comfortably with VAR and VAB. There are two key factors in relation to this:

- i) There is a perception that VAR and VAB were not fully involved in agreeing the detailed proposals to funders. Evidence from the Phase 1 evaluation shows that each area has differing needs and that delivery methods were tailored accordingly; these local nuances were not reflected in the project description and there is a lack of joint ownership of the project between partners. There is no doubt that the protracted period of negotiation with Objective 1 contributed to these difficulties, together with changes in individual personnel.
- ii) Although listed as an obligation in the memorandum of agreement, project management meetings have not taken place. The project manager has met regularly with QDOs, but separate meetings have not taken place on a similar basis between the three key personnel (the project manager and two line managers at VAR and VAB). As a result project management issues have been inappropriately brought to these team meetings and the two external line managers have felt 'out of the loop', ultimately choosing to attend team meetings themselves. A

clear decision making structure that set out where and how strategic, management and operational decisions should be taken is missing.

This said, there remains a strong commitment to sub regional working and to the benefits this can bring. The co-location with local infrastructure organisations has proved useful – it has provided access into local networks and has helped enhance QDOs' understanding of their 'client' groups. In addition, the hosts have benefited from having dedicated workers focused specifically on quality issues. There is a general sense that while this approach had some inherent practical and management problems it has been the best way of delivering effectively across the area.

Practical difficulties have included the development of recording and monitoring systems that are applied consistently across all the hosts, and by all the QDOs. This has taken some time to achieve, but has played a part in ensuring that the project has all the information it requires, when it needs it, and in an agreed format.

This problem aside however, the outposting does not seem to have had a negative impact on the QDOs as a group, and they do in fact feel part of a strong team. Indeed it is likely that their physical separation lent significance to team meetings that might not have been present otherwise. QDOs have valued these opportunities to get together and discuss all things quality, to learn from each other's practice and to share their knowledge about changes in quality awards and the quality environment, despite some periods of difficulty.

In Phase 1 the combination of part time workers and different physical locations led to the duplication of effort in the production of resources, with everyone doing everything rather than being focused on individual aspects of the work. The project was not 'badged' consistently, and what was missing was the branding of the project as a complete package across the area. Phase 2 has addressed these issues satisfactorily and there has been a consistent 'offer' from individual QDOs.

| Key points   | Learning for future delivery   |
|--|--|
| <p>Local hosting has been a key to the success of the project; no other model would have worked as effectively.</p> <p>A consistency in approach has been achieved; this is a notable development from Phase 1.</p> <p>There has been an imbalance in power between the three partners; this has not been a true partnership project.</p> <p>There have not been clear decision making structures; partners have not been fully engaged in project management and at the appropriate levels.</p> | <p>v. Outposting of staff can work well. However this relies on strong project and line management, good communication between the two, and effective monitoring and recording systems.</p> <p>vi. Projects need to pay attention to developing an identity that is applied consistently in all its internal and external communications. This both promotes the idea that this is a professional outfit and ensures beneficiaries can make a link back to the project as provider.</p> <p>vii. Measures should be taken to ensure potential partners are fully involved in the development of funding bids; without this full involvement it is hard to retrospectively create joint ownership of the resulting project.</p> <p>viii. Joint working requires clear decision making structured. Strategic,</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | management and operational decisions should be made at the appropriate level, by the right people, and within an agreed process and structure. |
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### 3.4 Staff resources

**Headline successes:** *Sufficient staffing to achieve challenging target outputs*

**Headline challenges:** *Inconsistent workloads throughout the project*

The project has employed 4 half time QDOs, a part time manager and part time administrator. In addition, support was made available to groups by the use of a consultant to work with groups, at various times during the project to supplement the staffing resource and add specific skills and knowledge as required.

In crude terms, this required each QDO to support 16 groups per year, totalling 560 hours of support, all within a half time post. Given that they also undertook additional tasks in promoting the project, supporting networking and developing standard support materials for groups, achieving the target outputs has been a considerable achievement. This compares favourably with the project's first phase when QDOs provided fewer hours of support per group.

The QDOs appear to have worked effectively as a team, had good communication with each other, and provided mutual support. They have been able to share their knowledge and experience, and act as a 'sounding board' to one another and both the team meetings and informal contact have been effective in this respect. As a result new team members have benefited from the experience of those more established and all have been able to tap into their colleagues' individual areas of expertise.

In addition, each QDO has been able to access specialist knowledge – on HR and legal issues for example – from colleagues within their host organisation. While this has created complications regarding the potential ‘double counting’ of groups, it has provided significant added value to the project and has helped embed SYQP within the individual organisations. Equally, it has ensured that the relevant range of specialist knowledge has been made available to groups.

Due to a range of circumstances not all of the QDOs are accredited PQASSO mentors; ideally they should be. Some also express a concern about their status when advising on other award schemes, such as Customer First; they would feel more confident with a similar level of accreditation across the range of awards they make reference to / advise on.

Internally, it is generally felt that the level of staff resource has been sufficient to deliver the required outputs and that groups have received enough direct support. What has been difficult however is that the project took some time to gather momentum and as a result there have been significant peaks and troughs in individuals' workloads. Only one team member thinks that QDOs have not had sufficient hours overall in which to undertake their work.

However almost half the groups questioned believe they have not received sufficient support from a QDO, and this seems to relate specifically to those groups that either joined the project late or did not receive targeted one to one support. In contrast other groups highlight the *“good one to one support”* and *“having someone close at hand to discuss any issues which may occur whilst going through the quality assurance system”*, emphasising the benefits of this focused and intensive one to one approach.

**Key issues**

| <b>Key points</b>  | <b>Learning for future delivery</b>   |
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| The staff team have had ambitious targets to meet, but have done so through a combination of good team work, effective communication | ix. Paying attention to team relations and communication contributes significantly to the success of a project. Sufficient time for |

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| <p>and pure hard work.</p> <p>The staff resource has been sufficient to meet the targets.</p> <p>The use of consultants to fill gaps provided a quick and flexible response during a period of difficulty.</p> <p>The scope for QDOs to access the expertise of colleagues in their host organisation has provided considerable added value to the project.</p> <p>There is some concern that not all QDOs are PQASSO mentors, and about their wider credibility when advising on other award schemes.</p> <p>Groups that have not accessed the full support package are dissatisfied / disappointed with the level of support they have received.</p> | <p>these activities needs to be built into a project's plans.</p> <p>x. Flexibility is a key attribute in a project's success. In this instance the use of consultants to fill gaps in delivery has proved effective.</p> <p>xi. Projects need to be embedded within their host organisation. Using the expertise of specialist staff has enabled this to happen and has ensured groups have access to all the support they require, without duplicating areas of skill and knowledge.</p> <p>xii. Steps should be taken to ensure staff are equipped to undertake their duties. Sometimes this is as much about giving them confidence in their roles as up-skilling them.</p> <p>xiii. The agreed package of support appears to have met groups' needs. Groups have been more dissatisfied with shorter interventions, suggesting that the package format is pitched at an appropriate level for most groups.</p> |
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### 3.5 Value for money

**Headline successes:** *Good value for money*

**Headline challenges:** *Lack of grants to support groups' activities*

The overall project budget for 2 years was £199,187 – of this Yorkshire Forward and Objective 1. For the period July 2007 to August 2008 both funders were to contribute in the region of £99,000, with the project due to continue with Yorkshire Forward funding alone until March 2009.

Through negotiation the Objective 1 completion date of 31 August was extended to 31 October, which resulted in an amended overall budget of £224,961. Objective 1 funding remained at the original level and Yorkshire Forward funding increased to £125,622.

In the period July 2007 to August 2008 the actual spend on the project was £215,444, split as follows:

|                         |          |  |
|-------------------------|----------|--|
| Salaries:               | £117,293 |  |
| Project delivery costs: | £53,775  | (All figures subject to confirmation and audit.) |
| Premises:               | £11,285  |  |
| Overheads / management: | £33,08   |  |

A total of over 160 groups were supported, of which 71 received support of 35 hours or more. A simple calculation of costs divided by number of groups indicates that it has cost £1,313 to provide support to each group – a similar figure to that of Phase 1. This is something of a crude analysis – some groups received less support and others significantly more – but it gives a reasonable indication of value for money. This does not take into account the additional activities that the staff engaged in – promoting the project, recruiting groups, internal matters etc. These figures therefore suggest that the

SYQP has provided good value for money, particularly given that staff were outposted and overhead costs (such as line management) duplicated between hosts.

One area where Phase 2 differed to Phase 1 was in the area of grant support. In Phase 1 grants of up to £400 were available to groups, but this was not allowable in Phase 2 although a similar amount of funding was made available to the project to support delivery (and was used for training and consultancy support for example).

**Key issues**

| <b>Key points</b>  | <b>Learning for future delivery</b>  |
|--|--|
| <p>The project has provided good value for money. The cost per group has been reasonably low and compares favourably with Phase 1.</p> | <p>xiv. This project demonstrates that direct services to groups can be provided at a relatively low cost and remain of a high quality. Significantly, it has also shown that outposting of staff is not an overly expensive option.</p> |

## **4. Impact of the Project**

### **4.1 Introductory comments**

This section examines the impact the project has had. While the different activities are interlinked and have all contributed to the overall outcomes, the following assesses the impact of the 5 key areas of work (as outlined in the objectives): developing skills and expertise in the process of quality assurance self assessment, awareness raising about quality issues, the provision of direct support to groups to implement quality assurance, co-ordinating management training initiatives, and establishing and maintaining networks. There is an additional summary of the overall impact of the project.

### **4.2 Developing quality assurance self assessment skills and expertise**

**Headline successes:** *Success in developing skills in self assessment*

**Headline challenges:** *Skills may be lost when staff move on*

There is no baseline from which it is possible to measure change against this objective, nor direct evidence about whether the project has reached its target audiences of managers and potential managers, and trustees. However the evidence from QDOs suggests that most groups have little or no prior knowledge neither of quality assurance, nor of the self assessment process specifically.

When directly questioned on this point groups can identify a range of skills they had gained, including specifics such as marketing and business planning, and improved knowledge of quality assurance schemes. They are also able to point to a range of benefits from their involvement with SYQP, most notably the process of reviewing existing systems through self assessment and identifying gaps: *"the knowledge gained enabled different workers to apply different practices"*.

These factors suggest that groups should be well equipped to continue monitoring their own progress and engaging with quality issues into the future. However what is unclear is the extent to which these skills lie with individual members of staff or are embedded within groups. Indeed the evidence points towards difficulties in getting broad ownership from staff and trustees, and in resourcing quality work sufficiently (in terms of people, money, energy and staff changes), suggesting that skills may well be lost when individual members of staff move on. It could still be expected however that they at the very least leave behind up to date policies, procedures and practice, and that they take their enthusiasm for quality to new parts of the voluntary and community sector.

Key issues

| Key points   | Learning for future delivery  |
|--|---|
| The project has achieved its goal of improving skills and expertise in the self assessment process of quality assurance.                     | xv. Providing support to individual groups has led to increased knowledge and skills in quality and self assessment.                  |
| There are questions about the degree to which these skills lie with individual members of staff or are embedded with all staff and trustees. | xvi. Attention must be paid to ensuring quality is embedded in the organisation and has full ownership from staff and trustees alike. |

### 4.3 Awareness raising about quality issues

**Headline successes:** *Groups see the widest value of their quality work*

**Headline challenges:** *Too few groups engage in quality work for the implicit benefits it will bring to their work*

The timescale over which the SYQP has run has coincided with a period when quality has grown in priority and significance within the sector nationally; there has been an increasing range of relevant quality awards available to

voluntary and community groups, and Change Up and the Hubs have spread awareness across organisations. Through the period of Phase 2 it has also been the case that an increasing number of funders are seeking to ensure that groups are pursuing continual improvement or that they have a quality award in place, particularly in the arena of procurement and commissioning.

With no baseline against which to monitor change, there is no way of assessing what impact the project has had on raising awareness about quality issues, quality awards and their benefits within this period of rapid change. Of course, at the very least the 160 or so groups the project worked with will have a better understanding of quality, and it is likely that they will have shared some of this knowledge with their partners and in their networks. Related activities with the quality networks and events will also have had some impact.

There is a perception that elements of quality are very important to groups of all sizes within the VCS across the area, but that quality itself is still not something that many automatically want or think to engage with. There is a sense that the project has played a part in increasing awareness and understanding, but that there is still a lot more to do – there are many groups yet to participate in the project and there are external pressures from funders to require groups to have quality systems in place. Over the period of Phase 2 this requirement for the providers of commissioned services to hold quality awards has become a major driver for groups. This is of particular concern as it could direct groups into applying inappropriate quality systems, simply to fulfil their funders' / commissioners' demands – this will ultimately be counter productive and reinforce negative stereotypes of quality systems and awards.

It is somewhat disappointing that many groups are still not engaging in quality to with the explicit purpose of improving their policies, procedures and practices: *“we need to have an externally validated quality system in order to access contracts”*. Some have joined the project because they want to *“ensure we are working towards best practice”* or *“to improve our services”* but this is not widespread. It is clear however that regardless of their original motivation, groups do ultimately see the value of the quality work they have achieved, particularly the fact that it has provided a framework for a systematic review of their progress: *“the system is very useful; it provided the organisation with the tools to develop*

*its services and meet the quality standard” and “the fact it is a ‘system’ means that we can work within an organised framework instead of fire-fighting issues as they arise.”*

It is not clear how the project has worked at a strategic level to influence funders and commissioners for example on the quality agenda. While there are other staff in the host organisations who do this work, there is little evidence of joined up thinking in this respect.

**Key issues**

| <b>Key points</b>  | <b>Learning for future delivery</b>   |
|--|---|
| <p>The project has existed during a period of rapid change in quality issues and awareness. With no baseline in place it is not possible to measure the degree of change, nor the direct impact the project has had on that change.</p> <p>There is a perception that the project has had some impact on awareness within the sector, via the groups it has directly supported, and the networks and forums.</p> <p>There has been some work to exert influence on quality issues at a strategic level, but more needs to be done to allay fears about future difficulties with funders making unreasonable demands to groups about the quality systems they should apply.</p> | <p>xvii. Project delivery work needs to go hand in hand with influencing at a strategic level so that quality work is on the agenda at all levels. It is particularly important to work with funders to ensure they have a full understanding of the context for this work within the sector.</p> |

#### 4.4 Supporting groups in successfully implementing quality assurance schemes

**Headline successes:** *Groups are working towards / have achieved quality awards, primarily PQASSO*

**Headline challenges:** *Groups struggle to resource quality work*

SYQP has provided a number of services to support groups that contribute to their work towards implementing quality assurance schemes. At the heart of this is the package of support comprising training and one to one support that has been applied in a standard fashion across the three constituencies. This is on contrast to Phase 1 when individual QDOs worked in different ways and the project was criticised for its lack of uniformity and a duplication of effort. Standardisation has improved this and has simplified QDO engagement with groups to a degree. However it has also been open to criticism about the lack of flexibility and responsiveness to differing local characteristics and the nuances of groups across the area, despite the fact that all partners agreed it. It is likely that the core issue here is not about the overall concept of a standard package but that it was not a product of agreement between the three partner organisations.

It is a notable success of the project that only a small minority of groups worked with have not started any work on a quality assurance scheme - most have commenced their work with some having achieved their chosen award and / or now ready to move on to the next level. PQASSO remains of most interest to groups, although a range of alternatives have also been pursued, including Customer First, Investors in People and ISO9001.

It is worth noting the difficulties that QDOs face in this respect. In all development work with groups there is an inherent tension between providing support, building capacity and achieving targets. Focused quality improvement is an area in which many groups have little previous experience, and the development process can be lengthy. The focus of the SYQP has been to ensure groups retain ownership of this process, that they take full responsibility for improving their quality and that the QDOs are 'signposters' and not 'do-ers', all within a reasonable time scale and a set number of hours support.

It is arguable that well motivated groups would have been able to work towards a quality award under their own steam, that a specific project such as this is not necessary. The evidence suggest otherwise however and groups have valued SYQP's support across a range of functions:

- Good knowledge and explanations of the range of quality systems, enabling groups to take decisions about the award most appropriate to their needs
- Providing supportive, helpful and accessible assistance to groups, keeping them focused and moving forward
- Enabling groups to engage in a consistent and strategic action planning process as a framework for their quality work
- Providing relevant and up to date information, often sourced from colleagues within the host organisations
- Helping to review and develop policies and procedures, including the provision of standard templates

One measure of the success of this approach is the degree to which groups continue to work on quality issues when the external support ends. In fact while groups clearly regard their action plans as 'live' documents that still guide their work, many have yet to complete their quality work and anticipate needing further support into the future: "*we need follow up mentoring*". Uncertainty about the future of SYQP is not helpful and there is a need for succession planning against a number of possible options. This is a great legacy of the project. Of course groups say they would still like ongoing support from the project, but these facts do suggest that there has been some success in ensuring groups continue to commit to quality improvements.

This success has been achieved despite the challenges groups face, and a high proportion have identified a lack of time and resources as major obstacles in their pursuit of quality awards. Fundamentally the QDO intervention therefore adds a valuable resource to groups for their quality work; without this groups would themselves have to resource all the functions QDOs provide (as listed above).

However some groups have made the case for a grant scheme to be a part of the project (as in Phase 1). A small amount of money to help pay for materials, assessment, and specialist consultant or staff time, would be welcome, enabling groups to decide for themselves how to resource their quality work.

Key issues

| Key points   | Learning for future delivery   |
|--|--|
| <p>The majority of groups supported have at the very least started work in a quality award.</p> <p>The delivery of a standard package of support has been an improvement on the overlaps, duplication and different approaches seen in Phase 1. However the nature of the package and the lack of local flexibility have been questioned.</p> <p>The functions performed by QDOs when supporting groups have been welcomed.</p> <p>Groups struggle to resource their quality work.</p> <p>There is concern about where groups can access support for their quality work into the future.</p> | <p>xviii. Resourcing remains a huge problem for groups pursuing quality awards. There should be scope for providing further assistance beyond the 35 hours of agreed support (at a less intensive level), and the question of grant aid should be investigated.</p> <p>xix. It is important that all partners are fully engaged in agreeing delivery packages to ensure they meet their local needs.</p> <p>xx. Many groups have not finished their quality work and they need to know where and how they can access support both in the short term and beyond. Clear messages need to be communicated to beneficiaries during 'wind down' periods in projects such as this, together with detailed succession planning – particularly</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | for the scenario where no further funding is won. |
|--|---|

#### 4.5 Co-ordinating management training activities

**Headline successes:** *Courses have been rated as Good or Excellent by over 90% of attendees*

**Headline challenges:** *Courses have been poorly attended*

From Phase 1 and into Phase 2, training has been something of a mixed success for the project. The training programme was delivered over a short period of time and events have been poorly attended – they have focused on both the individual quality awards (PQASSO, Customer First, Investors in People and ISO9001), and on generic skills relevant to groups pursuing quality (business planning, monitoring and evaluation, governance, managing volunteers etc).

A number of factors appear to have contributed to this picture. It remains the case that when offered the option of training or one to one support, it is the latter that is more appealing. Examining quality issues can leave groups feeling somewhat ‘exposed’ and this preference for one to one support is perhaps not surprising.

Courses have been delivered across the sub region and over a relatively short period of time. It will always be the case that someone in Sheffield will not necessarily want to travel to Barnsley for a course there, and vice versa. Similarly, that the courses are not happening exactly at the moment when groups are examining specific areas of quality, or that they are not willing / able to commit to training time out of the office. Such practical difficulties are not unique to this project’s training but they have worked against the delivery of a well supported programme.

What is clear is that when the training is firmly embedded within the programme of activity, as was the case in Doncaster in Phase 1, it is more likely to be a success. There is a sense that this has not been the case here; there is a

degree of ambivalence towards the training programme and doubts about its value as part of the project as a whole. Its benefits have not been 'sold' to groups and this has impacted upon its success.

That said, there has been a high degree of satisfaction from those who have attended training events. Courses have been rated as *Good* or *Excellent* by over 90% of participants. They have particularly valued the opportunity to take part in small group work exercises, and to engage in detailed debate about specific topics: *"the interactive discussion was an excellent way to engage with the materials"*.

Key issues

| <b>Key points</b>  | <b>Learning for future delivery</b>   |
|--|---|
| <p>Training has played a part in the programme, in introducing groups to quality issues and specific topics of relevance in quality work.</p> <p>Courses have been delivered over a short period of time, and have been poorly attended.</p> | <p>xxi. Training can make a valuable contribution to a project like this. They can provide groups with the opportunity to engage with quality issues initially, discuss their own problems and issues, and can offer more detailed support on specific issues. However, this only works when the activities are firmly embedded within the work programme, where there is synergy with other activities and a commitment to the value that such training can bring.</p> |

#### 4.6 Establish and maintain e-mail networks of quality champions and governance practitioners

**Headline successes:** *Groups value ongoing access to information and resources*

**Headline challenges:** *E-mail network not fit for purpose*

SYQP has co-ordinated three networks throughout Phase 2.

The only electronic network of these three was that of the Quality Network (QualityNet); established as an e-mail network of people interested in quality, plus all the groups worked with (incorporating two earlier networks of 'quality champions' and those interested in governance specifically). In practice it has developed into an information dissemination mechanism on quality issues for SYQP; the term 'network' is something of a misnomer and a 'bulletin' would be a more accurate description.

In Phase 1 the volume of information and frequency of mailings overwhelmed recipients. The evidence for Phase 2 suggests that frequency is no longer an issue and the monthly / bi monthly distribution is acceptable to most. However the usefulness is questionable: about half the groups think it is *quite useful*, but there is certainly no majority supporting the benefits it can bring. Most groups only occasionally read the bulletin, but the facts behind this picture are probably quite complex. The recipients are the same kinds of groups that have identified a lack of time to dedicate to quality work, and they are likely to read information about specific topics if they arrive at the pertinent time for them and on a 'need to know' basis: *"it is very low on a list of priorities"*.

What is clear is that QualityNet is not fit for purpose. While groups do say that elements have been useful – notably information relating to legal and policy issues, and details of training and other events – they are clearly not finding it a particularly useful resource. The original concept of a network is missing and there is some evidence that recipients would appreciate the opportunity to share information and queries with other groups, and at the time that they need to do so.

In many ways the Quality Forum is the physical opportunity for groups to do just this. Forums have been held quarterly for the same audience as QualityNet, each event having a quality related theme and attended by a relevant specialist. Initially attendance was good, attracting 50-60 people per forum, declining to 12-15 people more recently (from a database of around 200). Feedback on the events has been consistently good, and the perceived informality of forums is more popular than training, so it is unclear why numbers have dropped so significantly. A number of factors could be at play and there is likely to be some overlap with the difficulties the training programme experienced - for example, practical problems with time, timing and venues, and conflicts with other events (such as the training programme run in 2008).

However there is a possible overlap too with the problems experienced with QualityNet; is the use of themes a fundamental obstacle? When a theme is proposed it immediately means that a certain percentage of potential participants will not attend because it is not relevant to their current needs. Arguably, open sessions, with participants bringing their current queries, could better meet groups' needs, or a combination of the two approaches.

The third network is that specifically for quality practitioners, the Quality Practitioners' Network (QPNet). Seven events have been held, with an average attendance of six or seven people (from a membership of 12). A high proportion of members see the benefit of being involved in some form of forum on quality assurance because it "gives space to explore common issues" and provides valuable networking opportunities. The format of regular meetings is popular, although practitioners face similar problems to groups in finding time to attend.

These three networking mechanisms have shown varying degrees of success. What is clear is that there is some need to provide additional, hands off support to groups, particularly once the intensive one to one work comes to an end. They need ongoing access to information and resources, as well as the opportunity to share their own experiences and hear those of others in the same situation. The e-mail bulletin format of the QualityNet is not fulfilling this brief; the Quality Forum meetings fare better but would need a degree of further analysis and re-thinking to sustain the early levels of

attendance. In contrast the practitioners' network appears relatively successful, meeting needs and benefiting those who attend.

There is some sense that co-ordination and maintenance of the networks has been a low priority for the project as a whole, with the focus on meeting the Objective 1 'businesses assisted' target. It is also not altogether clear that individual team members were aware that targets existed for 'networking / supply chain initiatives'. Given their quite fundamental part in delivering this project it is disappointing that their profile has remained relatively low.

Key issues

| <b>Key points</b>   | <b>Learning for future delivery</b>  |
|---|--|
| <p>The e-mail bulletin format of the QualityNet has not met groups' needs. They seek more of a real network where they can raise issues and enter into debate with groups in a similar situation.</p> | <p>xxii. Projects need to ensure that e-mail networks are fit for purpose and meet groups' needs. A network should be just that; it should provide its members with the opportunity to raise queries and share experiences for example.</p> <p>xxiii. People welcome the opportunity to come together to network and share experiences. However this work in itself requires resourcing to be successful and meet participants' needs.</p> |

#### 4.7 The impact on quality across the sector

Objective 1 targets have been exceeded and 71 groups have received 35 hours of support from the SYQP. In addition a further number in the region of 90 have benefited from 2 hours of business support or 6 hours of skills development. This has led to a raft of improvements in those groups – in procedures, policies and systems; governance and trustee development; staff induction, training and development; user feedback and responsiveness; and in improved planning and management overall - all of which will impact on their effectiveness. These are significant achievements and parallel those for Phase 1.

In addition, the groups continue to regard their action plans as 'live' documents that guide their quality work. Significantly, a big majority of groups believe that working towards a quality standard has had an effect on their long term sustainability. Many groups set out to pursue a quality award due to pressure from external sources, but they are ultimately able to value the much wider raft of benefits their investment in quality will bring: *"we now have recognition from our partners"* and *"quality is not firmly on our agenda; it is something we are really going to work at"*. They are better organised; engage staff, trustees and users more effectively; plan better and execute their activities more efficiently.

It is clear that groups do not see the end of the project's involvement as the end of their quality work, and this is an important message. Many intend to continue implementing their action plan, working on quality issues, and improving their policies, procedures and practices.

This is not to say that they have not experienced difficulties in pursuing a quality agenda. Time and resourcing in general are the main obstacles they have faced both in developing and implementing their action plan. It also remains difficult to get interest in and broad ownership of the quality agenda internally within groups – from colleagues and trustees alike. What is different from Phase 1 however is the level of priority that quality has been afforded overall; there is much greater awareness of the need to engage in quality improvements (albeit a result of the funding / commissioning driver).

What is missing from this picture is what quality improvements lead to. Neither team members nor the groups have been outcome focused and there is little evidence about the impact of this work on the delivery of services and day to day operations of the groups supported. Anecdotally it is suggested that groups benefit in the following ways:

- Improved customer service
- Staff are better supported and more efficient
- Improved confidence
- Increased legal compliance
- Easier access to information to support funding bids

These are all notable successes and suggest groups that can be more effective and sustainable into the future. However unmet needs remain. Groups that have engaged with the project to date will require further support and information as their quality work progresses. There are many more groups that are yet to begin work on quality improvements and even more for who quality is yet to get on the agenda. But in this current environment where there are significant and growing external drivers for quality assurance, the need could even grow exponentially.

## 5. Concluding Comments

Phase 2 of the SYQP has had some difficulties, particularly at the outset, and yet it has delivered its targets, while offering groups the kind of support they both value and benefit from. In all there has been success in achieving all the original project objectives.

Groups have particularly welcomed the one to one support from QDOs, and the way in which they have been offered appropriate levels of support and encouragement together with access to resources in pursuing the quality agenda.

What has also worked well is the opportunity to meet and discuss quality issues with peers in a relatively informal environment, for both groups and practitioners. As a result the Quality Forums have been more successful than the training programme and virtual networking.

The project has had to respond to a number of issues and challenges along the way, mainly created by poor project definition and not helped by a dispersed team across the sub region. It has however sought to meet these challenges head on and has been creative in responding to problems. It has sought workable solutions that contribute to funders' targets and meeting groups' needs alike. Indeed it is commendable that the project has not lost sight of what groups need from it, and has kept those needs to the fore in making decisions about delivery methods.

All of this work has happened on a relatively modest budget. Direct comparisons suggest the project has provided good value for money, comparable with Phase 1.

Overall, the project has been successful and has worked towards embedding quality in groups across the sub region. There are areas in which improvements to the project can be made and this evaluation gives the opportunity to focus on some of those issues in planning future delivery, as highlighted in the key learning boxes in this report.

It is recommended that the project reflects on this study, celebrates its successes and applies the learning to a putative Phase 3, or to similar sub regional partnership projects. Good practice would also suggest that the key messages from this evaluation should be shared with stakeholders, to include the host organisations, funders, partners, and the groups which have participated in the SYQP.

## Appendix 1 Evaluation questions

| Question  | Staff:<br>interviews | Project<br>manager:<br>interview | Line<br>managers:<br>interviews | Administat<br>or:<br>interviews | Benefic-<br>iaries:<br>question-<br>aire /<br>interviews |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>CONTEXT</b>  |                      |                                  |                                 |                                 |  |
| 1. Have any changes taken place that have impacted on the project e.g. changing requirements of a major funder, the national picture on quality issues? |                      | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                 |  |
| 2. How important is quality assurance within the sector as a whole? Has this changed over the last 2 years?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                 | ✓  |
| 3. Were stakeholders involved in agreeing the purpose, aim and objectives of the project?   |                      | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                 |  |
| 4. Are the purpose, aim and objectives appropriate for what the project has actually done?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                 |  |
| <b>INPUTS</b>   |                      |                                  |                                 |                                 |  |
| 5. Do the different elements of the project fit together into one clear programme of work?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                 |  |
| 6. Have the resources been sufficient to manage and deliver the project?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                               |  |
| 7. Has the project operated efficiently? Is it value for money?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                               |  |
| 8. Has the staff resource been sufficient?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                               |  |
| 9. Were the original targets realistic and meaningful?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                 |  |
| 10. Where have there been problems in meeting the targets? What have been the reasons for this?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                               |  |
| 11. Have the appropriate skills and experience been available to contribute to the project?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                               | ✓  |

| Question  | Staff:<br>interviews | Project<br>manager:<br>interview | Line<br>managers:<br>interviews | Administrat<br>or:<br>interviews | Benefic-<br>iaries:<br>question-<br>aire /<br>interviews |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 12. Are the appropriate sources of help, support and expertise available to support the work of the project?                    | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                | ✓  |
| <b>PROCESS</b>  |                      |                                  |                                 |                                  |  |
| 13. Has the project been responsive to monitoring information in informing decision making?                                     |                      | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                |  |
| 14. <i>What was the contribution of the consultants?</i>  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                |  |
| 15. Has the delivery method been appropriate for achieving the targets?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  |  |
| 16. How did groups find out about the project?  | ✓                    | ✓                                |                                 |                                  | ✓  |
| 17. Why have groups got involved in the project?  | ✓                    |                                  |                                 |                                  | ✓  |
| 18. What was the initial contact like? <i>Was it clear what was on offer and were the areas to focus on clearly identified?</i> | ✓                    |                                  |                                 |                                  | ✓  |
| 19. What has been the nature of the QDO ( / consultant) support e.g. prescriptive, hands on, hands off, empowering etc.?        | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  | ✓  |
| 20. What have been the most useful aspects of having an individual (QDO) to support the process?                                | ✓                    |                                  |                                 |                                  | ✓  |
| 21. What have been the least useful aspects of having an individual to support the process?                                     | ✓                    |                                  |                                 |                                  | ✓  |
| 22. Has there been enough support?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                | ✓  |
| 23. Has it been the right kind of support?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                | ✓  |
| 24. In what ways could this support be improved in the future?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                | ✓  |
| 25. What different support will groups need in the future?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  | ✓  |
| 26. Have training events been integrated with support work with groups?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  |  |

| Question   | Staff:<br>interviews | Project<br>manager:<br>interview | Line<br>managers:<br>interviews | Administrat<br>or:<br>interviews | Benefic-<br>iarie:<br>question-<br>aire /<br>interviews |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 27. Has the training met groups' needs?  | ✓                    |                                  |                                 |                                  | ✓   |
| 28. In what ways could the training programme be improved in the future?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  | ✓   |
| 29. How has the Quality Net e-mail network contributed to the overall delivery and direction of the project?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  | ✓   |
| 30. What other networking and partnership working has taken place?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  |   |
| 31. What records are kept by the project? Are they comprehensive? Do they meet the project's needs?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                |   |
| 32. What monitoring data has been collected? Has this been sufficient to inform decision making about the project?                                   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                |   |
| 33. How has the project's organisational structure worked in practice i.e. central base and outposted staff?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                |   |
| 34. What have been the advantages of this model?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                |   |
| 35. What have been the disadvantages of this model?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                |   |
| 36. What is the project's 'fit' with the host organisations' purpose and objectives?   | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  |   |
| 37. To what extent has the project integrated with other aspects of the host organisations' activities?  | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               |                                  |   |
| <b>OUTPUTS</b>   |                      |                                  |                                 |                                  |   |
| 38. What kinds of groups have participated in the project e.g. are they the ones that most need quality systems, or is it just the switched on ones? | ✓                    | ✓                                | ✓                               | ✓                                | ✓   |
| 39. How many groups have participated in the project?  |                      |                                  |                                 | ✓                                |   |
| 40. What has the drop out rate been? What are the reasons for this?  | ✓                    |                                  |                                 | ✓                                |   |

| Question   | Staff: interviews | Project manager: interview | Line managers: interviews | Administrat or: interviews | Beneficiaries: question-naire / interviews |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| 41. What has been the impact on group effectiveness?   | ✓                 |                            |                           |                            | ✓  |
| 42. What has been the impact on group sustainability?  | ✓                 |                            |                           |                            | ✓  |
| 43. What has been the impact on the skills and experience in quality systems in the sector?  | ✓                 |                            |                           |                            | ✓  |
| 44. What have been the benefits to beneficiaries / groups members?   | ✓                 |                            |                           |                            | ✓  |
| 45. What has been the impact of the Quality Net e-mail network?  | ✓                 |                            |                           |                            | ✓  |
| <b>OUTCOMES</b>  |                   |                            |                           |                            |  |
| 46. What has been the impact of the project on the awareness of quality systems and their benefits within the sector?                              | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                         |                            | ✓  |
| 47. What has been the impact of the project on the sector as a whole across the area?  | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                         |                            | ✓  |
| 48. Are there differences between sub regions? What are the reasons for any differences?   | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                         |                            |  |
| 49. Have groups moved on to other work on performance improvement issues following on from their involvement in the project?                       | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                         |                            | ✓  |
| 50. Have there been improvements in joint working, networking, partnership and collaboration on quality issues?                                    | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                         |                            | ✓  |
| 51. What are the future needs – for groups already supported and further groups?   | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                         |                            | ✓  |
| 52. Will the groups be considering applying for an externally accredited Quality Mark (PQASSO, Customer First, ISO9001 etc) in the next 12 months? |                   |                            |                           |                            | ✓  |