



This is the fifth of a series of five case studies where we address common problems experienced by voluntary and community organisations by looking at how an infrastructure organisation experienced the same problem and came up with a successful strategy to overcome it.

5. Keeping everyone involved

Despite best intentions, once the process of quality management has started to produce results there can be a temptation for hard-pressed staff to drop the issue of quality assurance down the agenda and concentrate on other, more pressing, priorities. This can occur more easily if neither staff nor trustees are kept aware of the progress and achievements made in improving quality; nor of the gaps in the organisation's quality framework which need to be addressed. This organisation took steps to make sure that this would never happen.

Organisation:

Together for Regeneration (TfR) 8 staff governed by a Management Committee



Quality Management Status

PQASSO Level 1 assessed internally and ready external validation

Together for Regeneration was launched in 1999 to improve quality of life in communities by enabling local people to take effective action together for regeneration. It is managed by a committee - composed of members of the Diocese of Sheffield and other voluntary, community and faith sector stakeholders - which contributes a wide range of skills and takes a highly practical view of any new initiative and the way it might further or hamper the aims of the organisation.

Four years ago TfR asked Melanie Broomhead to take on the role of Quality Champion because of her existing knowledge of quality management techniques. She became part of a Quality Working Group which also included a senior manager, an administrator and a member of the governing Steering Group. With the help of presentations to the Management Committee by Nat Thompson of the South Yorkshire Infrastructure Quality Project supported through ChangeUp, they identified PQASSO as the quality management tool most appropriate for their organisation. PQASSO was chosen, in part, because of its strength in the area of governance and accountability. Their initial self assessment confirmed this area to be a priority for development.



TfR Barnsley Group

“The adoption of the framework was easy to sell,” reported Melanie, “because it allowed us to recognise the quality assurance we already had in place and to embed the consideration of quality improvement within the organisation. Things coming out of the PQASSO **overall plan** helped us to identify priorities for staff and for the Management Committee.”

The use of PQASSO led first to a review and improvement plan for TfR's information management systems, including a review of ICT and communications strategies. The improved ICT practices allowed TfR to develop an electronic approach to keeping quality management achievements on the visible horizon. As a first step they realised that all staff needed to be able to see immediately where the organisation was in terms of its development of quality management and to understand the priorities for quality improvement in their own work plans and activities.

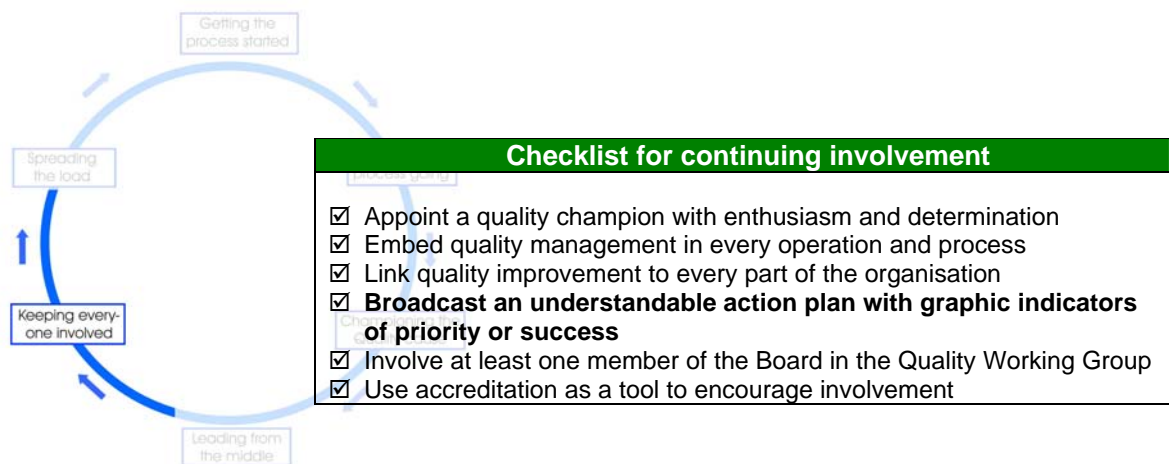
They hit upon the idea of maintaining the organisation's **detailed quality action plan** on a common area of the computer system so that it was instantly available to all. The Administrator developed a traffic light indicator system to identify achievements and priorities for improvement that meant staff were constantly aware of the organisation's priorities for development and could include them in their own work plans. Staff were therefore able to view and add evidence of compliance with the PQASSO standards as they became available and to see the next priorities as they were identified by the Quality Working Group.

The Management Committee were also able to see the impact of the effort in quality improvement had on achieving the organisation's objectives.

"...has to be seen as a continuous living process"

"The quality assurance has to be seen as a continuous living process." says Melanie. "The question we had to ask ourselves was 'If our funders don't require it then should we consider it a priority?'" The answer was simple. Quality management brought enough benefits to the organisation that it became a target in its own right.

Melanie says "Although we have been identified as a high performing organisation, the quality journey has helped us to focus on the ways we can improve aspects of our organisation. PQASSO, as a quality management tool allowed us to map the journey ahead of us and embed our learning in our organisational and management practices. Further opportunities for quality assurance work are being considered, particularly in the area of evaluating the organisation's customer focus. Customer First is one tool that could be used for evaluating their ability to impact on and relate with their customers.



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