

Summary for charities

WCVA commissioned 20 Degrees Consulting Ltd to undertake research into attitudes towards the Trusted Charity Mark and quality standards more generally. It gathered feedback from charities, funders and County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) in Wales.

The Trusted Charity Mark

The Trusted Charity Mark is a nationally recognised quality standard which has been designed specifically for charities. Charities can apply for the quality standard after completing a self-assessment process.

Trusted Charity is a name that charities like – certainly more than the previous name of PQASSO. It succinctly conveys what holders of the mark seek to be. Charities recognise that the mark was developed by their sector and so potentially fits the requirements of the sector better than other general quality standards. However, the scope of the mark is limited to registered charities and awareness of the Trusted Charity name is still not as high as the old name of PQASSO.

Organisations holding the Trusted Charity mark suggest the comprehensive review, self-assessment and improvement processes required give them most benefits. These benefits manifest as improved policies, processes and procedures in areas such as governance and the delivery of services consistently. Consequently, organisations seeking to live the values underpinning their assessment are more likely to experience the benefits than those seeking a quality standard purely to support their funding bids.

'It provides a focus on good governance and best practice, and compels you to find the time to give this attention.'

CVC Chief Executive reflecting on organisation's Trusted Charity mark experience

'In principle organisations with or without quality marks could score equally... If you have an accredited standard, the (quality) questions simply answer themselves. Therefore, you are more likely to get higher marks if you have an accredited standard – it is much easier from an assessor's perspective.'

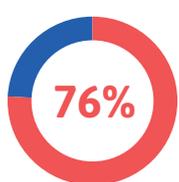
(Public sector procurement representative)

In principle, these benefits could be achieved by organisations using the Trusted Charity framework as a basis for self-assessment and development. The research suggests some organisations are doing this to an extent, perhaps focussing on specific areas of their work, structure or manner of operating.

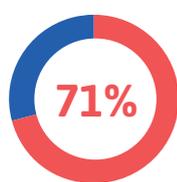
Two main barriers to pursuing the full Trusted Charity Mark were reported by charities. The assessment fees are a barrier to some charities, but this tends to be a secondary consideration. The time commitment to pursuing the mark is a more significant barrier for many.

The assessment process for the Trusted Charity Mark is considered by charities as particularly rigorous, compared with other marks they had encountered. However, few funders appear to understand the relative effort of gaining an extensive quality standard, such as Trusted Charity, relative to others with a much more restricted scope, for example Investors in People. Consequently, there is scope for ensuring that funders have a more fulsome understanding of how extensive and involved the standard is and what it means to have achieved it.

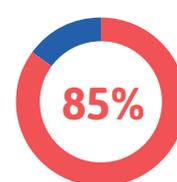
Percentage of charities believing the Trusted Charity mark would give them benefits:



Improved governance



Improved quality in delivering the organisation's core objectives



Enhanced reputation with funders

Not all holders of the Trusted Charity Mark are equally active in maximising the benefits of this accomplishment. Those using the process of engaging the widest group of internal stakeholders, including trustees / board members throughout the self-assessment process, appear to benefit the most. Similarly, those using the details of their assessment report are maximising benefits with funders and staff morale – more than organisations that simply announce they hold the mark.

‘The Trusted Charity mark provides greatest benefit if you want to embed a culture rather than tick boxes.’

(Charity Chief Executive)

More general research findings

Charities and funders both report that holding a quality standard has benefits. The choice of which quality mark brings most benefits depends on a range of factors, including:

- The purposes the charity wishes to achieve from pursuing the mark
- The size and maturity of the charity
- Recognition of the quality standard amongst the stakeholders that the charity seeks to influence
- The willingness or ability of the charity to invest the required time and money into pursuing the mark.

Table 1 provides an overview of the quality assurance landscape.

Table 1 - Main types of quality marks, standards and awards

Type	Examples	Key benefit
Generic – applicable to a wide range of organisations	Trusted Charity or ISO 9001	Helpful for a complete review of all aspects of an organisation
In-house	MQM – MIND Quality Mark	Ensuring consistent standard of service across multiple sites or groups of an organisation
Sub-sector or professional standard	Respect – Standard for people working with perpetrators of domestic violence or abuse in the UK	Assurance that the organisation has the appropriate professional standing
Issue specific	Disability Confident or Living Wage Employer	Signals an organisation’s stance on a specific issue

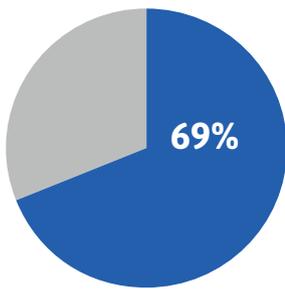


Percentage of funders showing some increased inclination to support a charity holding a quality mark

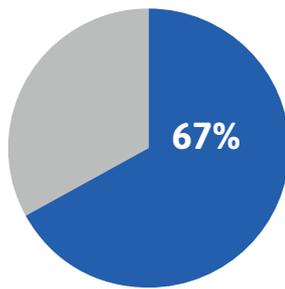
Charities and funders largely agree that mandating the use of any quality standard for all charities could create more problems than would be solved. Exceptions are quality standards needed to demonstrate professional competence or tackle issues of safety or security.

In general, funders look for evidence that applicants operate to a particular level of quality. A quality mark can be an indicator that this level is met but other factors, such as financial stability and organisational culture, can be equally valid indicators.

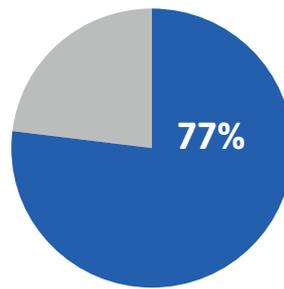
Levels of medium to high awareness of quality marks:



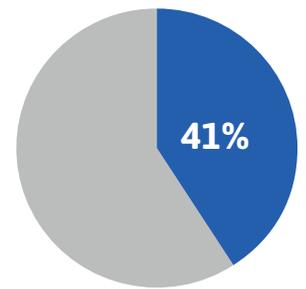
Trusted Charity



Investing in Volunteers



Investors in People



ISO 9001

