

Summary for funders

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.

General research findings

Respondents reported that there are a number of benefits for charities holding a quality standard. The choice of which quality standard brings most benefit for a given charity depends on a range of factors, including:

- The purposes the charity wished to achieve from pursuing the mark
- The size and maturity of the charity
- Recognition of the quality mark 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.

No single quality standard suits the needs of all charities - their circumstances vary. Charities and funders largely agree that mandating the use of any quality mark for all charities could create more problems than would be solved. Exceptions are quality standards required to demonstrate professional competence or tackle issues of safety or security.

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

(Charity Chief Executive)

Levels of medium to high awareness of quality marks: ● Charities ● Funders

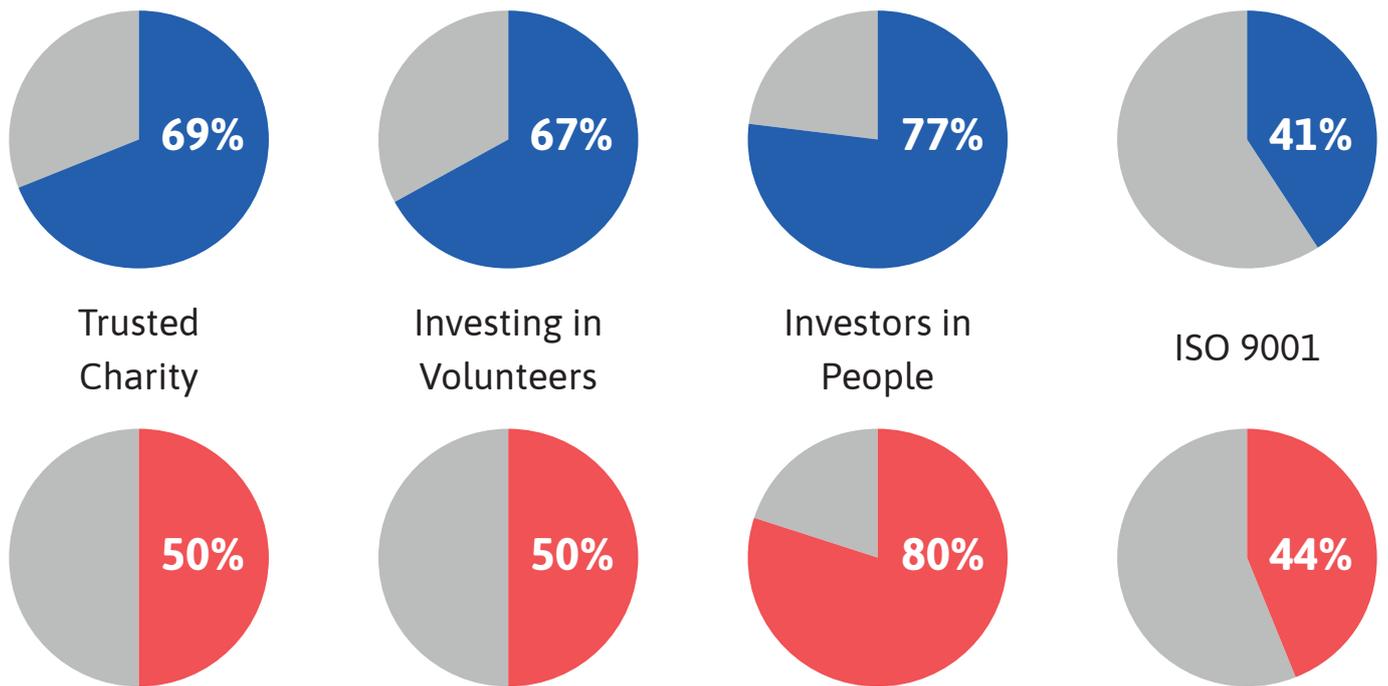


Table 1 provides an overview of the quality assurance landscape.

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

The Trusted Charity Mark

The Trusted Charity Mark is a nationally recognised award that has been designed for charities. Charities can apply for the quality mark 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 tend to recognise that the mark has been developed by their sector and so potentially fits the requirements of the sector better than other general quality standards. The Trusted Charity Mark can only be gained by registered charities. As such, those organisations falling outside of this category are not able to achieve it.

Funders are less likely to recognise the Trusted Charity Mark than charities. Public sector commissioners have particularly low levels of recognition for the Trusted Charity Mark.

Which Quality Mark?

A Welsh charity secured over 20% of its income from services commissioned from one local authority. A few years ago the local authority issued a tender for services stipulating organisations should hold ISO 9001 or an equivalent. When asked for names of equivalent standards, the local authority could not name any.

Although the charity had heard of Trusted Charity (called PQASSO at the time), they decided their least-risk option was to pursue ISO 9001. They were able to do this quickly, building on quality systems that they already had in place. The objective was simply to gain the quality mark to underpin their tender. This was achieved, however the organisation felt that the process was largely bureaucratic and did not improve the quality of their organisation nor the services they delivered.

The assessment process for the Trusted Charity Mark is considered by charities as particularly rigorous, compared with other marks they had encountered. By contrast, few funders appear to understand the relative effort of gaining an extensive quality standard, such as Trusted Charity, relative to a standard 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.

Organisations holding the Trusted Charity Mark suggest the comprehensive review, self-assessment and improvement processes required gives them most benefits from pursuing the mark. These benefits are largely 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 benefits than those seeking a quality standard purely to support their funding bids.

Benefits of holding the Trusted Charity mark

An organisation achieved the Trusted Charity mark. A senior officer spoke of the benefits brought by the mark. She suggested the process of working towards the mark has changed the way the board thinks and acts.

‘Policies and procedures have been updated. There are now far more stringent processes in place when the organisation spends money.

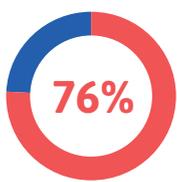
‘A buddy system has been instituted so that we know a colleague has arrived home safely if they don’t return to the office after a meeting.

‘Although the board was happy that it was representative, a skills matrix has been brought in to guide areas of development for future appointments.’

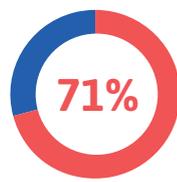
Two main barriers to pursuing the full Trusted Charity Mark are reported by charities. The assessment fees are a barrier to some charities but this tends to be secondary. The time commitment to pursuing the mark is a more significant barrier for many.

Charities and funders agree it would be helpful if funders and public sector service commissioners have a stronger appreciation of the scope of the Trusted Charity Mark and the effort required to attain it.

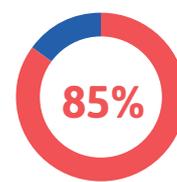
Percentage of charities believing the Trusted Charity mark would give them benefits:



Improved governance



Improved quality in delivering the organisation's core objectives



Enhanced reputation with funders

'It was a months-long process and thorough work but definitely worth the effort.'

Representative of a charity holding the Trusted Charity mark

'Although not essential a standard certainly supports confidence in an organisation.'

(Funder)

"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

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