

North of England Refugee Service

QUALITY POLICY

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By: Georgina Fletcher

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By: Georgina Fletcher / QTG

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By: Quality Task Group

• **Commitment to Quality:**

Quality is a core value of the North of England Refugee Service. NERS is committed to Best Practice and a consistent, high standard across its service provision to all stakeholders¹.

To this end, NERS is committed to:

- Meeting, as a minimum requirement, all standards set under legislation relating to:
 - Health and Safety
 - Equal Opportunities
 - Diversity
 - Data Protection
 - Employment
 - Race Relations
 - Charitable Status
 - Company Status
- Meeting the quality standards required through its membership of Advice UK, and through the framework of the OISC² and CLS³, and in fulfilling contractual requirements of established partnerships
- Establishing standards against which service provision can be assessed
- Setting up good practice guidelines for all its policies and procedures relating to:
 - Confidentiality, impartiality and equity
 - Governance, accountability and probity
 - Planning and development
 - Human resource management, including volunteers
 - Financial management and financial control
 - Administration
 - Openness and circulation of information
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Volunteer development
 - User feedback and participation

¹ Stakeholders refers to all those who have an interest in NERS, including users, staff, management, partners, volunteers and funders.

² Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner

³ Community Legal Service, Legal Services Commission Quality Mark

Stakeholder involvement
Working environment

- The instilling of quality awareness in all management, staff and volunteers as in all their professional roles and professional activities, encouraging them to aspire consistently to achieve higher standards across all service provision.
- Being a user-centred service, being truly responsive to and representative of user needs by systematically incorporating quality systems into planning and service development (via client feedback mechanisms).
- Ensuring consistency in the quality of NERS operations across the organisation as a whole.

In pursuit of this, NERS has adopted a systematic approach to its organisational development by implementing a Quality Assurance system, which is based on review of its policies and procedures and regular self-assessment, resulting in action plans that will lead to a continuous and sustained improvement in the quality of its service provision and management.

- **Quality Assurance System: PQASSO⁴**

PQASSO was adopted by the National Refugee Forum (NRF) as the generic quality system most appropriate for the Regional Refugee Organisations. While incorporating the principles of the internationally recognised ISO 9000 system, it allows for the setting of self-defined quality criteria which recognise the specialist nature of a voluntary sector refugee service. As such it will provide the standards against which NERS can continuously assess the quality of its services, and a systematic approach to their improvement. The PQASSO and QASRO⁵ systems will act as a management tool to aid NERS in meeting its commitment to being a quality led service, by supporting the establishment of a user-centred, quality-conscious culture, and by maintaining a focus on constantly improving the quality of service provision. It will support the development of a proactive and preventive approach, rather than a corrective one, and will allow NERS to be effectively responsive to changes in legislation affecting its clients.

PQASSO & NERS

In May and June 1999 NERS' Board of Directors, staff and volunteers carried out a self-assessment of how NERS operated in terms of its internal organisation and the service we were delivering. As a result, we drew up an Action Plan to provide a systematic route to improving the quality of our policies, procedures and service standards. This Action Plan was approved by the Board of Directors on 18th August 1999. Since then, NERS' Quality Task Group has been working consistently to design and review existing policies and procedures in order to improve quality standards. All staff and volunteers are aware of NERS' commitment to improvement in quality and their participation and contribution to the process is encouraged. Their contribution in terms of their suggestions and expertise are an important and valued part of this process of development, since NERS recognises

⁴ Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations

⁵ Quality Assurance System for Refugee Organisations

that successful implementation depends upon the commitment and involvement of all staff, volunteers and members of the Board of Directors.

QASRO⁶

QASRO is a quality assurance system for voluntary and community organisations working with refugees. The first edition of QASRO was developed and launched in 2001 by members of the National Refugee Forum, a group of regional and national refugee organisations. Working together to implement quality standards, its members had concluded that they – and other refugee organisations – needed a quality system tailored to their needs and services. This second edition of QASRO also reflects the experience of Forum members and other organisations during the past five years, including a year-long pilot by refugee community organisations. Like other quality systems, QASRO can help organisations to make continuous, systematic improvements in the way they run their organisations and deliver services.

Quality through self-assessment

Some quality standards and systems are accredited. This means that they set recognised standards against which organisations are assessed and accredited by an external body responsible for administering the standard. Accredited systems and standards include the Community Legal Service Quality Mark, Investors in People and the regulatory scheme of the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). Other quality systems are non-accredited. They are based on self assessment rather than external accreditation. Non-accredited quality systems include PQASSO, Quality First and QASRO itself. Though not subject to external evaluation, non-accredited systems are powerful tools that enable organisations to become more effective and improve their services.

QASRO, Quality Mark and OISC

Many refugee organisations provide advice. As a result, they often find it useful to obtain the Community Legal Service Quality Mark. Organisations providing asylum and immigration advice are required by law to register with the OISC and meet its standards. Using QASRO can help towards meeting either of these accredited standards. Funders and other stakeholders regard both accredited and non accredited systems as evidence that an organisation runs well and works efficiently. But a self-assessment based system such as QASRO produces evidence of the practical steps an organisation has taken to improve and demonstrates an active commitment to quality.

• Implementation

- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to undertake implementation of policies and procedures developed and approved by the Quality Task Group (QTG).
- Accountability for its practical implementation lies with NERS' QTG. The composition of the QTG is described in the QTG Terms of Reference document. NERS' Quality Assurance Project is led by NERS' Quality Champion.
- This includes organising QTG meetings; producing and collating documents and reports; circulating information; building up the Quality Manual; submitting policies for

⁶QASRO, Second edition, Refugee Council

the Board of Directors approval and overseeing implementation.

- The QTG will carry out annual self-assessment on the implementation of the Quality Systems.
- An annual Quality System Progress Report will be produced for the Board of Directors.
- Quality Annual Action Plans will be produced on the basis of the self-assessment exercise. Copies will be circulated to all staff and volunteers.

• **Quality Manual**

NERS' Quality Manual will be constantly updated by the Policy and Development Co-ordinator throughout the project. The Quality Manual provides an immediately accessible record of all NERS' objectives, policies, procedures and systems, and the standards achieved to date.

- It acts as a useful induction tool for all new staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, and ensures that NERS' quality practices will persist in the structure of the organisation.
- It helps in setting targets for the achievement of improved practice, and in generating action plans to achieve them.
- It assists in strategic service development by supporting all future funding applications, by helping contract and grants officers identify the status NERS has achieved in terms of quality standards.

Approved by Board of Directors

Signature.....

Position.....

Date:.....