

Frequently asked questions about Cultivating Quality

Q. How do I get started?

A. We suggest that the first thing you organise is an introductory session for a cross section of people from your project/organisation. Include any service users as well.

Q. What should the starting point be?

A. You can start with any of the 11 quality areas in the scheme. There is no need to work through the quality areas in the order they are presented. If, for example, your project has just started a new 'partnership', this may be a good area for you to start first.

Have a look through each of the areas before you begin. You might find it easier to start with a quality area you feel more comfortable with, an area of particular interest to your team, or an area where you feel confident about your current performance.

Q. What constitutes 'evidence'?

A. Each quality area has specific criteria and examples of what may be used as evidence. This is only a guide and not an exhaustive list. If you use something different, or are unsure, check by reading the standard, and make sure what you use meets the standard required.

You could involve other people who are not necessarily familiar with that area of work and ask them to look at what you have as evidence. They could give their opinion on whether the evidence really meets this criteria and standard.

Evidence needs to be relevant to the project, relate to the standards, and be something you can audit. Evidence does not necessarily need to be a 'paper trail' of information, it can include other formats as well, i.e. videos, photographs, audio information, thank you letters, press cuttings etc.

Q. What is minimum and maximum amount of evidence?

A. There is no minimum or maximum amount but this is a good opportunity to look at what evidence you actually have.

If you compile five or six different pieces of information to meet one criterion, go through and check that this information isn't being repeated. Can you improve this information or consolidated it? Evidence should be drawn from at least six months of activity for it to be considered as proof that you have met the criteria.

Q. How can I collect evidence?

A. Evidence can be in a wide range of formats and does not necessarily have to be gathered together into one place or portfolio. All you need to know is where the evidence is saved or stored in your systems. If you work electronically you may just have an 'action plan' or list which signposts where the evidence can be found. Alternatively, it may be easier for you to have a Cultivating Quality folder and collect all the evidence into one folder.

Q. How long will it take to work through a quality area?

A. As a rough guide, each quality area will take on average one to two hours to discuss and work through. The time that you need to take any action plans forward will differ widely between projects and is therefore not included in this estimate.

Q. How often should the evidence be reviewed?

A. On average, a review should take place once a year. Reviewing evidence will involve answering a number of questions about the quality of the evidence itself. You might want to consider the following questions:

- Is the current evidence reliable and up to date?
- Does the evidence follow current organisational practice, i.e. are documented procedures being followed?
- Where appropriate, how much has the evidence taken account of the views of users?
- Are all relevant staff, volunteers and members of your governing body aware of its existence and where they can find it?

Implementing Cultivating Quality is a process which encourages continuous improvement. Using Cultivating Quality will help your project to regularly review and monitor services and implement improvements to meet the needs of your users, as well as other stakeholders.

If you are implementing the scheme, or are about to, you could use the Thrive Members' Forum to ask questions and communicate with other users.