



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Quality Mark for Youth Work: guidance for assessors

The skills required by assessors and what they have to do.

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Introduction to the Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales and assessors

The Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales (referred to for ease of reference throughout this document as 'the Quality Mark') is a unique tool for self-assessment, planning improvement and gaining a Quality Mark, and is divided into three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold.

In order to externally assess an organisation applying for the Quality Mark against the quality standards of the three levels, there is a pool of assessors, of which some are lead assessors. The difference between an assessor and a lead assessor is the amount of time an assessor has been involved in the process, the training and evaluation of their readiness to become a lead assessor, as well as their willingness to take up this role. Not every assessor will become a lead assessor, and to ensure sustainability of the Quality Mark, assessors are needed at both levels.

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Assessors have been, and will continue to be, recruited from organisations across the youth work sector in Wales. All assessors will be provided with appropriate training to ensure that they fully understand the Quality Mark but also that they fully understand their role when undertaking assessments and can comply with the requirements of the role, which are explained in more detail later in this document.

The contractor will work with assessors and will have the responsibility for ensuring appropriate assessors are assigned to organisations being assessed, and also in ensuring the quality of the work they undertake.

It is anticipated that all organisations who engage with the Quality Mark process will be asked if they wish to put forward an assessor to support others through the process they have already gone through. This can be of substantial benefit to both an individual in terms of their personal development and to an organisation in enabling it to learn from the good practice of others in the sector.

The role of the assessor

There are two levels of assessors – an assessor and a lead assessor.

Assessor

The assessor's role is to work within an assessment team (a small group of assessors convened by the contractor and headed by a lead assessor) to consider the information and evidence provided by an organisation who wishes to apply for a Quality Mark at any of the 3 levels.

In addition, the assessor's role is to be a critical friend who is supportive of the organisation, and who can offer their insight, feedback and suggestions in an empathetic way, with the view to increase the skills and knowledge of the organisation. The role is not that of an inspector of the provider.

Assessors will have experience drawn from a variety of youth work roles, for example: strategic and operational management, voluntary sector development

leader, supervisor, academic. They will be experienced in the Quality Mark process, assessment, and monitoring and evaluation.

There are several routes an assessor can take to secure this role.

- Assessors will be drawn from a greater pool of experience. They will ideally hold a minimum of a Level 3 qualification in Youth Work, have a minimum of five years' experience in a specific area of expertise or a wider general experience of working with young people and of youth work delivery. They will have experience of the Quality Mark process will receive training in assessment and will receive 'on the job' training while taking part in live assessments.
- Assessors will have significant experience of working with young people in another professional capacity or discipline and hold a professional qualification, for example: youth justice, teaching, housing, advocacy or well-being support. They will possess the necessary qualities and attributes required of an assessor but do not hold a recognised Youth Work Qualification.
- Assessors can be Level 5 or 6 students who are using the Quality Mark to aid their learning for a youth work-related degree course. They would attend assessments in an observational capacity and for learning purposes and reflective practices only.

Lead assessors

Lead assessors will be drawn from the pool of current assessors. They will have additional leadership qualities and have a Level 6 qualification in Youth Work or equivalent.

In addition to the role of an assessor, a lead assessor will have experience of undertaking Quality Mark Assessments as an assessor, and is capable of and has sufficient capacity to:

- provide the leadership skills to take on the additional responsibilities to coordinate the assessment team
- liaise with Quality Mark assessment applicants

- guide and provide advice to new assessors as on-the-job training

Lead assessors are pivotal in the conducting and coordination of the assessment. They will liaise with the applicant organisation and take on additional responsibilities which include:

- developing a timetable for the assessments
- gaining additional evidence if required
- ensuring other assessors on the assessment team are aware of their roles and meeting the requirements of that role
- identifying if there is sufficient information as part of the assessment
- compiling a report for the contractor on which the recommendation to award the Quality Mark will be made

What process will assessors follow?

A team of assessors will be allocated by the contractor when organisations who are applying for the Quality Mark are ready for their external assessment. Ahead of any inspection starting, lead assessors will be given access to all the evidence the assessment team needs to establish initial lines of enquiry. Through discussion they will identify the key issues facing an organisation to signpost the assessor team members to further evidence, where this is needed. All assessors are expected to follow the code of conduct for Youth Work Quality Mark Assessments shown below, and at all times it is expected that the assessment team will act with dignity and respect while undertaking the assessment, and will be treated in the same way by the organisation being assessed.

Assessors will work through all the required information submitted by an organisation which is needed to satisfy the specific level of Quality Mark being applied for, and will prepare a final report for the contractor to consider ahead of them sending their recommendation to award the Quality Mark to the Welsh Government.

The role of the assessor, especially the lead assessor, is demanding and requires them to exercise the objectivity essential to an assessment process.

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Assessors will be required to respect the strict confidentiality of all assessment discussions, which will include sensitive business information.

Estimated time needed for undertaking assessments

While it may vary with each assessment, it is envisaged that the time needed to assess a single level of the Quality Mark is:

- 1 day for a desk-based review of evidence, developing and communicating a plan for the assessment visit
- 1 day for an assessment visit
- 0.25 to 0.5 days to produce a brief report of the outcome of the assessment
- 0.25 to 0.5 days to attend a moderation panel meeting
- 0.5 days if a subsequent assessment visit is required

Code of conduct for assessors

It is expected that assessors behave in an appropriate manner when working in the role of an assessor. The following information will help assessors to conduct their role successfully.

- Assessors should be courteous and professional, remembering when working with applicants to the Quality Mark they are a representative of the Quality Mark process and the Welsh Government.
- Assessors must conduct their assessment role in a supportive, open and honest way.
- Assessors must ensure they treat evidence with the appropriate respect and confidentiality.
- Assessors must maintain a purposeful dialogue with the all concerned in the assessment and to report honestly, fairly and reliably.
- Assessors need to observe youth work practice and talk to staff, learners and other stakeholders, and they should treat this engagement with respect and sensitivity.
- Assessors must bring any concerns about the assessment (either through digital contact or on a practical visit) to the attention of lead assessor and the

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lead contact in the organisation in a timely and suitable manner, for example: if there is a serious safeguarding issue uncovered or a health and safety matter arises.

- Assessors should also be clear that there are no conflicts in undertaking the assessment for an organisation. If any arise they should report them immediately to either the lead assessor or the contractor.

Applying to be an assessor

If you are considering applying to become an assessor, the information below provides additional detail of what you will be required to evidence in your application. Details of how and when you can apply are available from the contractor, and you can also express an interest for future rounds of recruitment. Knowledge Assessors will have sound knowledge of:

- the youth work sector in Wales and the range of organisations that deliver youth work
- policies, strategies, initiatives and guidance that underpin youth work in Wales
- the different settings in which youth work takes place
- theory, purpose and practice of youth work
- quality assurance systems and processes
- performance management systems and processes
- workforce development and qualification routes

Skills and abilities

It is essential that assessors have the following skills and abilities to:

- interpret and apply the quality standards and indicators for the three levels
- review and evaluate a wide range of information including policies and guidance, statistical data, reports, feedback from stakeholders, and work-based products, for example: evidence of planning and evaluation
- evaluate the effectiveness of an organisation's approach for assessing their quality, performance, impact and cost effectiveness, by analysing and

- interpreting data and information
- assess the quality and impact of young people's involvement in planning, evaluating and decision-making
- interpret evidence of young people's learning, achievement and progress as a result of their participation in youth work
- assess policies, plans and practice aimed at promoting equality and diversity
- communicate effectively with a variety of stakeholders, including young people, staff, volunteers, strategic leaders, trustees and elected members
- communicate effectively in writing and produce concise reports on the outcome of assessment processes
- be impartial when reviewing and assessing evidence
- be open to challenge and new ways of working
- work to tight timescales and deadlines

Welsh language skills

Within the team of assessors Welsh language skills are required, but these skills are not required by all appointed assessors. The Welsh language skills required are:

- reading: can read work-related material
- spoken: can speak fluently in all work-related situations
- understanding: can understand all work-related conversations
- written: can prepare written work in Welsh

Experience

Assessors will have experience of:

- working in a range of youth work contexts
- supporting, managing or delivering youth work
- analysing and interpreting data and information
- assessing quality and performance in youth work settings
- managing and evaluating youth work
- applying quality assurance processes and systems

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Tasks and responsibilities

The key tasks and responsibilities of an assessor include:

- evaluating a range of evidence submitted by organisations that apply for the Quality Mark through:
 - a desk-based review of documentary evidence
 - meetings with stakeholders including young people which may be undertaken virtually or face-to-face
- visits to provision
- assessing an organisation's suitability for the Quality Mark against the quality standards and indicators for the three levels
- developing a plan for the assessment visit based on the findings of the desk-based review, and communicating and agreeing a plan with the organisation that is being assessed
- maintaining records of the evidence that has been reviewed
- undertaking assessment interviews, which may be conducted either digitally or face-to-face means, and interviews may include:
 - meetings with key people in the organisation
 - meetings with key stakeholders including young people
 - brief visits to the organisation's provision
 - verbal feedback to the organisation at the end of a visit
- maintaining records of meetings and observational visits to provision
- producing a brief assessment report that identifies the outcome of the visit and makes a recommendation to the awarding body
- maintaining communication with the contractor and the awarding body and the organisation applying for the Quality Mark
- identifying issues as they arise and taking steps to resolve them
- involvement in the appeals process where appropriate
- attending a minimum of two training events and two assessments per year

Next steps

If you are interested in becoming an assessor or want to know more about the role you should in the first instance contact the contractor. If you have not

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received this information directly from the contractor you can contact the Welsh Government who will ensure that your details are passed on youthwork@gov.wales.

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