



Raising Quality Standards



CES wins The Charity Awards 2008 award for Effectiveness for its work on PQASSO

In awarding the Effectiveness award to CES, the judges said that PQASSO was a model that had “developed over a period of time to become exceptional”, and that “recognition for PQASSO is well overdue”, because it had made “a very serious impact in terms of raising standards across the sector”.

CES was the first charity to offer national support to charities wishing to improve their quality, and did so initially via systems such as the ISO standard, which had been imported from other sectors. However, the message from its users was that for many small organisations what was needed was something much more practical, straightforward, low cost and tailored to their needs. In particular, users complained of jargon, with useful concepts not being expressed appropriately, while other concepts were not appropriate at all.

Around the same time, in 1996, the Deakin Commission on the future of the voluntary sector highlighted the need for the sector to raise its game on assuring quality or risk an uncertain future. CES published the first edition of PQASSO quality system one year later following substantial consultation and piloting. This was followed by the creation of free briefing sessions and, later, a two day training course on implementing PQASSO. In 2001 CES began building a network of licensed PQASSO mentors, mainly within CVSs, to widen its support network. Last year, an externally assessed kitemark was launched after four years of planning and piloting.

PQASSO has become the most widely used quality system in the UK third sector, with 13,000 copies sold. It is now also increasingly being adopted, translated, and adapted in emerging civil societies such as Hungary, Croatia, Japan, India and Bangladesh.

“PQASSO is a good example of an innovation that has really taken off,” according to chief executive Colin Nee. “Arguably, more than any other single initiative, PQASSO has made the somewhat daunting discipline of quality assurance accessible throughout the third sector.”



CES staff at the awards on 19th June