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Executive Summary

This research report evaluates the achievements, challenges, success factors and limitations of a five-year project at Salford Community and Voluntary Services called Quality Counts, which focussed on quality assurance in the voluntary sector.

The Quality Counts project has created a legacy of continued learning and improvement in Salford by successfully supporting community and voluntary organisations to embed quality in every aspect of what they do.

Following the analysis of a range of sources, conclusions are made about how best to support organisations to maximise the benefits of implementing a quality assurance system. Based on these conclusions, a number of recommendations have been made to reflect the learning that has been gathered. If Salford CVS is able to access a future funding opportunity to run a similar project, these recommendations will be incorporated into the project plan.

This report can be used by infrastructure support organisations, similar to Salford CVS, and by community and voluntary organisations who are interested in quality assurance. The findings can also be used by the organisations involved in the project to illustrate their success and achievements to stakeholders.

Definitions

Charities Evaluation Services and www.proveandimprove.org provide the following definitions to terms used in this report:

Accreditation	A process by which a person or team from another agency reviews an organisation's performance against a recognised set of quality standards. The organisation is given certified recognition to show it has met the standards
Baseline	Can be described as an imaginary line used as a starting point for making comparisons
Benchmarks	Used for the comparison of similar processes across organisations and industries to identify best practice, set improved targets and measure progress
Evaluation	The process of determining what has been achieved during or after a particular activity
Monitoring	The routine, systematic collection and recording of information
Outcomes	The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of services and activities provided by an organisation
Outputs	The activities, services and products provided by an organisation
Quality	The extent to which a product or service satisfies the expectations of stakeholders. Quality is about excellence in the way that the organisation is run, in service delivery and about achieving the very best results
Quality action plan	A written plan which shows the improvements to be made to an organisation
Quality assurance system	The range of ways in which an organisation can implement quality management through use of a formal system to encourage improvements
Quality framework	A set of criteria to facilitate a rigorous, consistent and comprehensive approach to an organisation's management in the pursuit of continuous

improvement. The EFQM Excellence Model is an example of this

Quality standard

Represents an agreed level of service or organisational performance that should be met each and every time

Self-assessment

A process by which people from within an organisation make judgements about the organisation's performance against a set of quality standards

Social enterprise

Any business which trades in the market with a social purpose, using business tools and techniques to achieve social aims

Stakeholders

The people or groups who are either affected by or can affect the activities of an organisation. They include staff, volunteers, users, customers, suppliers, trustees, funders, investors, purchasers, donors, supporters and members

Third Sector

Organisations which are non-governmental, value-driven and which principally re-invest surpluses in the organisation or the community. This includes all organisations that would define themselves as voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises or co-operatives.

Introduction and Acknowledgments

Between 2008 and 2012 the Quality Counts project provided intensive support to voluntary and community organisations to help them implement a quality assurance system. In addition, Quality Counts provided learning opportunities to Salford's broader voluntary and community sector as well as to funders and commissioners.

The Quality Counts project succeeded in achieving all six of its project outcomes and this had an impact on improving service delivery for over 120,000 users who are some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in Salford.

In the final years of the Quality Counts project it became apparent that there is an increased need from the voluntary and community sector for support relating to quality assurance. This comes at a time however when the capacity to deliver support is soon ending. It is therefore vital for Salford CVS to find a way to meet this need without having the resources available from the Quality Counts project, which ends December 2012. Consequently, Salford CVS made an application to the BIG Lottery's Supporting Change and Impact fund. Money was awarded to fund the first aspect of their bid (Supporting Change) to analyse the Quality Counts project and to put forward suggestions for a new project model. The second aspect of Salford CVS's application (Supporting Impact) was unsuccessful.

One of the outcomes of Supporting Change is to produce a report to evaluate and capture the learning gained over the 5 years of the Quality Counts project and make recommendations to inform the planning of future support.

Between April 2012 and December 2012 information was gathered using formative and retrospective sources. The contributions made to all of these sources are invaluable. Every individual who has taken the time to complete a feedback form or respond to a survey has contributed to the legacy of continued learning relating to quality assurance. Special thanks go to the organisations and development workers who agreed to take part in interviews and whose in-depth and considered responses formed a significant part of this report.

This report focusses on the achievements, challenges, success factors and limitations of the Quality Counts project in order to build a complete picture that can be used looking forward and beyond 2012.

Methodology

The research methods used to evaluate the Quality Counts project are outlined in the table below.

Source	How?	Who?	How many?	When?	Contributors
Interviews	Conducted face-to-face; each lasted approximately one hour	Quality Counts development workers	2	October 2012	<p>Sarah Dodgson, development worker at Salford CVS, project lead and Quality Counts development worker for all five years of the project</p> <p>Kalima Patel, development worker at Salford CVS, Quality Counts development worker for the final two years of the project</p>
Interviews	Conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone and each lasted between 30 minutes and one hour	Quality Counts organisations	4	October 2012	<p>Yvonne Trace, GMNA Co-ordinator at Greater Manchester Neurological Alliance (Year 1 Quality Counts organisation)</p> <p>Heather Parr, Quality Assurance Officer at 42nd Street (Year 2 Quality Counts organisation)</p> <p>John Phillips, Chief Officer at Langworthy Cornerstone Association (Year 3 Quality Counts organisation)</p> <p>Rabia Qureshi, Salford Link Worker at Salford Link Project (Year 4 Quality Counts organisation)</p>
Survey	An online 'Survey Monkey' was circulated via email	Participants of Quality Counts training	9	September and October 2012	A range of participants who attended Quality Counts training between 2010 and 2012

Source	How?	Who?	How many?	When?	Contributors
Feedback forms	Circulated via email or at final meetings	Year 4 Quality Counts organisations	5	At the end of Year 4 of the project	All five Year 4 organisations completed the feedback forms
Feedback forms	Forms were circulated, towards the end of the training/event	Participants of Quality Counts training and events	All courses and events	Throughout the project	All participants were given a feedback form and asked for their contributions
Case studies	Case studies were completed by organisations at the end of the support	All Quality Counts organisations	20 (so far)	Throughout the project	All 25 Quality Counts organisations
Reports	Quality Counts reports were available at Salford CVS	Reports were completed by Salford CVS development workers	10	Throughout the project	The reports were completed by Salford CVS development workers
Feedback forms	Circulated at meetings	Funders and commissioners	51	Throughout the project	Salford CVS development workers met with funders and commissioners
List of externally accredited PQASSO quality mark organisations	List published online at http://www.ceas-vol.org.uk/PQASSO/pqasso-awarded-organisation	Charities Evaluation Services (owners of PQASSO)	182	List is accurate as of October 2012	Online research on all 182 organisations was carried out to ascertain where the organisation and its main service users are based.
Consultation and training on online learning and support	One full day of training delivered to Salford CVS staff	Learning Technologist	1 expert, 5 Salford CVS staff	November 2012	Tony Lowe, Learning Technologist and Director at Webducate Suzy Keen, Sarah Dodgson, Alison Jones, Elizabeth O'Connor and Hannah Taylor at Salford CVS

Results and analysis

This section of the report combines the information provided in interviews, case studies, evaluation forms and questionnaires to gain a clear insight into the achievements and limitations of the project. Key learning points and recommendations will be drawn from the information provided.

Achievements and Benefits

In order to evaluate the Quality Counts project and to capture its key learning points, this section will consider three of the project's achievements and analyse the main benefits to assess whether these should be taken forward. These three achievements have been selected for analysis as they are representative of different areas of the project's success, including one achievement that was an unexpected outcome of the project. See appendix A for an overview of the ten greatest achievements of the project.

25 organisations have successfully implemented a quality assurance system

As outlined in the methodology section, interviews were carried out with four different organisations. All four of the interviews confirmed that the organisations felt there was a strong positive impact as a result of the project.

'The main achievement was communication. It brought everyone together and created a buzz. Everyone was working towards the same goal and they were helping and supporting each other.'

Interview – Salford Link Project

'It helped us be clearer about what we were trying to achieve as an organisation. It has made us more efficient and effective.'

Interview – Greater Manchester Neurological Alliance

'It's given us a whole different way of thinking about things. It's about just being a lot better at what we do. We now have a way of working that comes from the discipline of using a quality assurance system.'

Interview – Langworthy Cornerstone Association

'It has helped us be more focussed on communication and has led to creating the online staff notice board. Using technology to help us communicate more effectively was a big step for us. I thought in time we might slide back into what we'd done before but we didn't because of the clear benefit of being able to access information quickly and efficiently.'

Interview – 42nd Street

The principle benefits were identified as improvements to the organisation's efficiency, communication, team working, motivation and focus. This contributed to an overall improvement to the organisation and its service delivery. The most significant benefit is that services were improved for the 120,095 users of the 25

organisations who implemented a quality assurance system with support from the Quality Counts project.

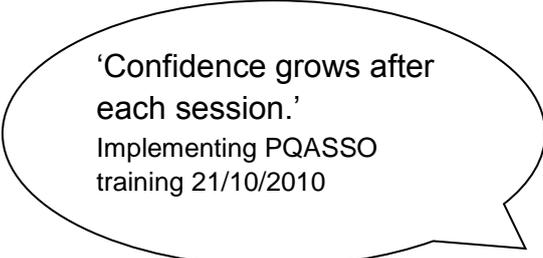
All of the interviewees described the improvements as reaching beyond just providing evidence for the quality assurance system and lasting after their time with the project had finished. The interviewees were keen to share examples of systems developed during the project that are still working well and illustrate how they have used the learning developed during the project to achieve subsequent success. For example one interviewee suggested a site visit in addition to the interview to show how the organisation continues to benefit from the Quality Counts project, including applying their learning to a current piece of work on safeguarding standards required as part of a tendering contract.

It is worth noting that all of the organisations interviewed have used PQASSO which is a holistic quality assurance system that provides the opportunity to embed improvements into all aspects of an organisation. Future support should help organisations to similarly maximise the benefits of their chosen quality assurance system to ensure in a similar way that improvements are achieved and that their impact is long-lasting.

The case studies are an equally important source of evidence to consider when looking at the benefits for organisations who received support from the Quality Counts project. The case studies list the policies and procedures introduced by organisations during the project, underlying the enhanced efficiency and long-lasting change highlighted in the interviews as key improvements. Development or improvement of policies and procedures is therefore highlighted as a key aspect of successfully implementing a quality assurance that should be considered when planning future support.

46 training sessions delivered to 495 participants

Feedback from participants of Quality Counts training is another important source of information regarding benefits for organisations. Sessions were consistently well-attended, throughout the lifetime of the project, attesting to the demand for high-quality training relating to organisational improvement. The vast majority of participants gave positive feedback in evaluation forms collected immediately after the training. 80% of participants indicated an increase in their confidence, knowledge and skills as a result of attending Quality Counts training.



'Confidence grows after each session.'

Implementing PQASSO training 21/10/2010



'Fantastic training, best I've experienced in a long time, feel confident, motivated and inspired to go back to my organisation with what I've learnt today.'

Business Planning Masterclass 11/06/2012

'The information we received enabled us to make decisions as to how to progress.'
Demystifying incorporation
06/08/2012

'The PQASSO workshop – well run, very inspirational and real.'
The PQASSO quality mark
22/02/2011

In survey responses collected after the training sessions, 78% of participants confirmed that they have implemented the learning gained from the training in their organisation. (See appendix B for further details.)

The project delivered 46 training sessions to 495 participants in total and this was clearly a significant benefit of the project. Training and learning should be considered when planning any future support, in particular how to achieve equally significant outcomes.

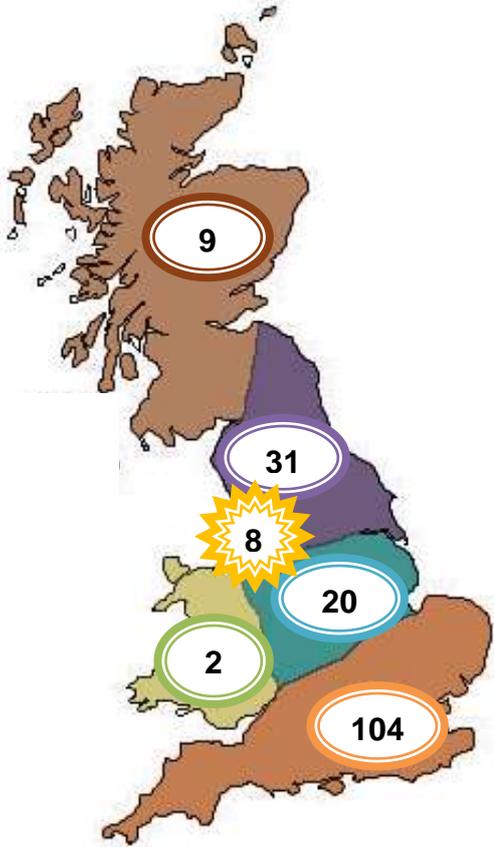
8 organisations have achieved the PQASSO externally accredited quality mark

One measure of the benefits of the Quality Counts project is the number of organisations that subsequently achieved a quality mark. This achievement is particularly interesting to analyse as it was an unexpected project outcome. A quality mark is an externally assessed award also known as a kite mark that is used to prove that organisations have met a high level of quality. The PQASSO quality mark costs anywhere between £1,200 and £3,500 in fees depending on the size of the organisation and the accreditation must be renewed every three years. Quality Counts organisations who have achieved the PQASSO quality mark make up a significantly high proportion of the total number of PQASSO quality marks in Greater Manchester (50%) and in the North West of England (35%).

North of England (including 8 Quality Counts organisations)	31
Midlands	20
South of England	104
Northern Ireland	0
Republic of Ireland	1
Wales	2
Scotland	9
England	155
International organisations	1
National organisations	13

*PQASSO quality mark
externally accredited
organisations*

PQASSO quality mark externally accredited organisations



‘Since getting the PQASSO quality mark we have got a discount on our insurance and it also helps when putting tenders in for services.’
Interview – 42nd Street

See appendix C for more details. The organisations are listed at: <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/PQASSO/pgasso-awarded-organisation>

‘At the end of the process we could say ‘We are good across the board and we can prove it’.’
Interview – Langworthy Cornerstone Association

The majority of organisations from the Quality Counts project expressed an interest in achieving an externally accredited quality mark (as highlighted in 75% of the case studies) and more than half of these organisations interested in a quality mark have since passed the required external assessment. This figure is expected to increase in the next year. Furthermore, all of the organisations with quality marks who have been interviewed expressed their intention to re-apply for the PQASSO quality mark after three years in order to maintain the external accreditation. This suggests that any future support should cater for internally and externally assessed quality assurance systems and should aim to sustain the high success rate in both by Salford organisations.

A significant benefit of the project was to help organisations secure funding for quality mark fees. This was another outcome that exceeded the expectations of the project and was achieved in addition to the outcomes agreed at the start of the project. The majority of the case studies refer to concerns about securing funding to cover quality mark fees. The eight Quality Counts organisations who have achieved the accreditation are the eight organisations who received funding from the Quality Counts project for the quality mark fees. This type of funding is very rare and the

opportunities in the future are likely to be even scarcer, if they are available at all. This issue is an important factor to take into consideration when planning future support.

Challenges

The challenges encountered by organisations, development workers and the project as a whole provide an indication of what should be included in future support.

Challenges for organisations

An evaluation of the Quality Counts project highlights that the key challenges of implementing a quality assurance system for organisations are the demands it places on time and establishing a collective understanding and buy-in from all involved (trustees, staff and volunteers). These will be reviewed independently in the section below.

Time as a challenge for organisations

In the case studies and interviews, significant challenges such as capacity, time management and a sufficient understanding of the time required to successfully implement a quality assurance system were described.

‘Making time was a challenge. You had to make time.’
Interview - Salford Link Project

‘At the start of the process we thought we were dead strong, no problems, thought we’d sail through it. As we went through the PQASSO stages we were aware there were areas where we were weak.’ Interview – 42nd Street

‘One of the greatest challenges was finding the time. It does take a lot of time to implement PQASSO.’
Interview - Greater Manchester Neurological Alliance

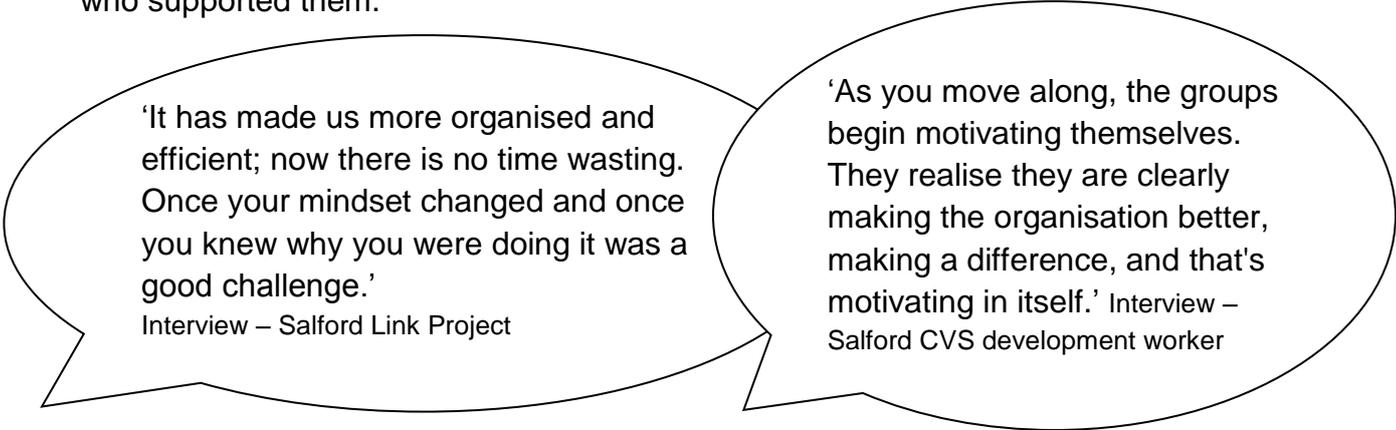
‘The main difficulty in implementing PQASSO self-assessment was time as it requires a lot of staff time to fully embed PQASSO throughout the organisation.’ Case study – Year 1

Concerns relating to time are recognised by quality assurance system providers (owners of the quality assurance framework and branding) who have dedicated sections on their website to advise organisations on the amount of time required to implement a quality assurance system.¹

¹ ‘How long does it take?’ is the one of the most prominent questions on the ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ section of the website pages for the most well-known quality assurance systems (Charities Evaluation Services <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/PQASSO/pqasso-faqs> Matrix Standard <http://www.matrixstandard.com/the-standard/faq/> The British Assessment Bureau <http://www.british-assessment.co.uk/faqs/iso-9001/>).

Although the Quality Counts project offered a range of support to help organisations understand and manage the time-consuming nature of implementing a quality assurance system, it was still a significant issue for organisations to overcome. This was particularly important at the start of the process. At the annual Quality Counts event, opportunities to gain insight into how much time an organisation needs to invest in implementing a quality assurance system was provided by local organisations speaking about their experiences. Info sheets were available including 'Approaching Quality: Choosing a system' with a column that gives an indication of the time required for each system. Organisations were encouraged to reflect in depth about their resources, including allocation of time, during the application process of the Quality Counts project.² Despite this, the time-intensive nature of the process still came as a shock to some organisations, especially for those who discovered they had less in place than they expected and therefore found that more time was required than they had planned for. This is an important point to consider in planning future support.

A turning point for a number of organisations in overcoming these difficulties occurred once the benefits of implementing a quality assurance system became more apparent in terms of efficiency and saving time. This was evident from the interviews with organisations and with the interviews with the development workers who supported them.



'It has made us more organised and efficient; now there is no time wasting. Once your mindset changed and once you knew why you were doing it was a good challenge.'

Interview – Salford Link Project

'As you move along, the groups begin motivating themselves. They realise they are clearly making the organisation better, making a difference, and that's motivating in itself.' Interview – Salford CVS development worker

Once it was clear that one of the main aims of a quality assurance system is to work efficiently, this helped motivate organisations to invest the necessary time initially as it was clear this would save time in the long run. The interviews highlighted that the processes implemented are more likely to last when the benefits of them are clearly evident and this will need to be considered when planning future support.

It is necessary for organisations to have the opportunity to research and understand the time involved in implementing a quality assurance system, to plan and manage

² Quality Counts project application form

B4. What resources will you contribute to the process? Please demonstrate your commitment to implementing a quality assurance system e.g. staff time, a dedicated quality champion, or financial contribution.

this efficiently and to consider the impact it will have on capacity and ability to deliver other work. The Quality Counts project gave organisations the opportunity to understand and manage the difficulties of committing to quality with such heavy demands on time. It is important to keep this common challenge in mind when considering future support and to make use of the learning gained from helping organisations to overcome this challenge. It is advisable to create a device that encourages organisations to start with an 'easy win' that will show an immediate and clear change for staff and volunteers.

Buy-in as a challenge for organisations

Collective understanding and buy-in is a key challenge discussed in the majority of organisation and development worker interviews. In some cases, understanding and buy-in from the board of trustees needed to be developed.

'Staff can see the positives and negatives of implementing quality assurance but the board aren't involved at the operational level so sometimes they don't fully understand what's involved and there was then problems with regards to the board allowing enough time and giving enough weight to implementing a quality assurance system.' Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'Initially the biggest difficulty was that people didn't see it as a priority. It took the Chief Executive to say 'It has to be now; it has to be important; we have to do it.' People also needed the permission to put other things to one side so they could focus on PQASSO. One of the biggest challenges for us was realising implementing quality is not just one person's job. If the organisation wants it, everyone has to get involved.' Interview – 42nd Street

'It has been very challenging when the lead person is not a manager or when the lead is not given the necessary authority from the start.'
Interview – Salford CVS development worker

It is evident from the interviews that the support of the board of trustees and management is vital in order for an organisation to succeed in implementing a quality assurance system, particularly if an organisation wishes to receive external accreditation. Without this support coming from the 'top down' at the start of implementing a quality assurance system, the whole process is more challenging.

The experience gained from five years of supporting organisations shows that ideally the person leading the implementing of a quality assurance system should be a manager with strong backing from the board of trustees. In order to tackle this

challenge, the development worker supported organisations to develop collective understanding and buy-in using techniques such as:

- Regular quizzes and updates for the trustees at board meetings.
- One-to-one and group training sessions.
- Regular newsletters updating everyone on the organisation's progress.

This is a key challenge to take into consideration when planning future support, along with the tools that were successfully used to overcome the challenge.

Challenges for development workers

By considering the challenges faced by development workers, recommendations can be made for future support. As described in the methodology, the two development workers currently working on the Quality Counts project were interviewed. The most significant challenges discussed in the interviews relate to tailoring the support to suit different organisations and adopting different roles to suit different individuals and structures within the supported organisations.

Tailoring support as a challenge for development workers

From the interviews with Quality Counts development workers, it is clear that a significant challenge is tailoring the support to suit each organisation. The development workers both comment on the differences between each of the 25 Quality Counts organisations and the importance of making the quality assurance system and the support work best for each organisation.

'The first chapter is always tricky because groups are still getting used to the language of the indicators, but once you help them tease out the meaning behind the language it's quite reassuring.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'One of the challenges is putting the language in a way that makes sense for each organisation. Even the two groups that I've been working with this year are very different groups and they are facing very different challenges themselves so you are trying to put the indicators to them in a way that makes sense to them. It doesn't always fit into nice neat boxes.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'There has been some cross-over but what has been interesting for me is that out of the 25 groups they have all been so different. That's the good thing about PQASSO; it can be moulded to fit any group. You have to pick out the aspects of PQASSO that mean something to them.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'Often groups put their sole focus on the example sources of evidence instead of looking at the indicator. I guide them back to the indicator and show them how to look for relevant pieces of evidence.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

24 out of 25 of the organisations chose to implement PQASSO and in doing so picked a quality assurance system that is designed to be used by any community and voluntary organisation; however it is worth noting that the majority of organisations required support with the language of PQASSO and with finding evidence specific to their organisation. This should be taken into consideration when planning any future support.

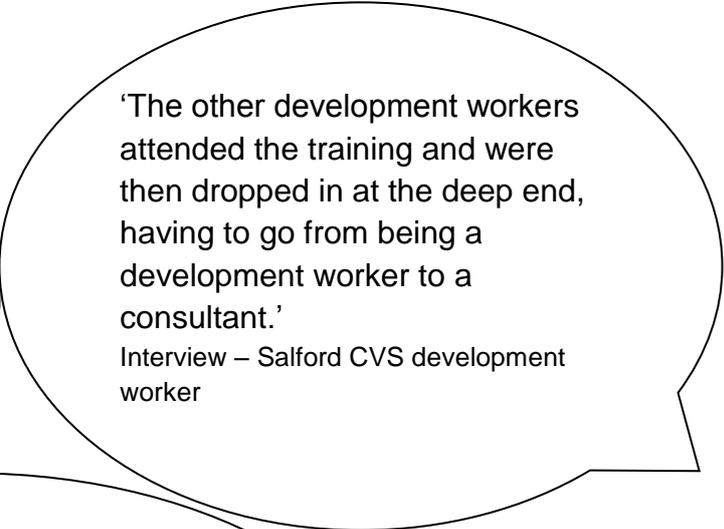
Adopting a range of roles as a challenge for development workers

In order to tailor the quality assurance system to suit the organisation and help them overcome the challenges discussed above, development workers had to adopt a range of different roles when supporting organisations. In the development worker interviews the role of a Quality Counts development worker was referred to as being a 'mentor', 'critical friend', 'consultant' and 'liaison'.



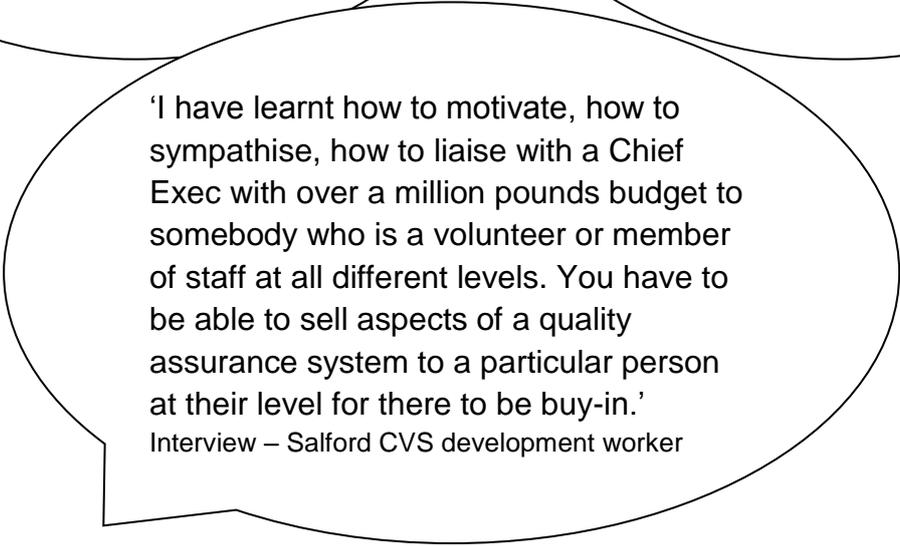
'You find yourself acting as a consultant to a Chief Officer and then having a discussion with the full staff team and this requires versatile skills.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker



'The other development workers attended the training and were then dropped in at the deep end, having to go from being a development worker to a consultant.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker



'I have learnt how to motivate, how to sympathise, how to liaise with a Chief Exec with over a million pounds budget to somebody who is a volunteer or member of staff at all different levels. You have to be able to sell aspects of a quality assurance system to a particular person at their level for there to be buy-in.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

As discussed already, many organisations found that attaining buy-in from everyone in the organisation was challenging; therefore in order to help organisations manage this challenge, development workers had to speak to each member of the organisation at their level. In cases where the development workers were required to

manage challenging behaviour from an individual at a level superior to their own, this could be especially difficult. It is important that future support addresses these challenges and performs a similar range of different supportive roles that are pertinent to people at different levels within an organisation.

Challenges met by the Quality Counts project

As discussed in other sections of this report, the benefits for organisations that have been able to access support to implement a quality assurance system are evident, however one of the key challenges of Quality Counts was recruiting organisations to the project.

The recruitment and selection of organisations each year required significant resources, including general and targeted promotion, an annual event and an application process. In 4 out of 5 of the Quality Counts years there were more applicants than there were opportunities and Salford CVS received applications from organisations who had unsuccessfully applied in previous years. The pressure to recruit and select organisations that occurred each year is not an indication of a lack of need or value of the support provided by the Quality Counts project, however it is an important point to take into consideration when planning future support particularly in relation to the timeframe and resources required.

Success factors

The three factors which stand out as the most essential to the success of the Quality Counts project are: willing organisations, thorough and knowledgeable support and a bank of resources. This is evident from the interviews with organisations and development workers, the information collected from training/events participants and the Quality Counts organisation feedback forms.

Willing organisations

The responses from the development worker interviews were instant and unanimous; the organisation has to want to implement a quality assurance system.

‘Having good groups, the willingness and the motivation to do it, that makes it. Having groups who are really up for it, really wanting to make the changes.’ Interview – Salford CVS development worker

‘You can’t implement quality assurance on a group; it has to come from them. Funders are saying groups have to have PQASSO, but the thirst, the drive, the passion has to come from the group. The best groups know that it’s going to be a hard slog but they’re up for it and they maximize on the support from me or Kalima.’
Interview – Salford CVS development worker

‘It’s down to the groups and the individuals who want to take stock of what they’ve got, their gaps and do something about it.’
Interview – Salford CVS development worker

This comment from the development worker interviews relates to the challenge faced by organisations who struggled when not everyone in the organisation shared the same thirst for organisational improvement.

Thorough and knowledgeable support

All four of the interviews with Quality Counts organisations focussed strongly on the support from a development worker as a key factor in their success. This was echoed in the comments collected at the end of year 4 of the project, using feedback forms.

‘Without her unwavering patience, always going the ‘extra mile’, staff would still be struggling. She was objective, critical and thorough – she did not shy away from asking for some work to be re-done/corrected, which is crucial for any organisation wanting to improve.’ Feedback form – Year 4 organisation’s comments at the end of the support

‘I think Sarah was the key resource; she would always say ‘evidence it for me’ and she would always respond to our emails immediately if we were struggling.’ Interview – Salford Link Project

‘We feel lucky that we were able to work with Sarah. I’m not sure we’d have been able to stick to time scales without Sarah’s strict regime.’ Interview – Greater Manchester Neurological Alliance

‘Sarah was very professional and consistent with her work and feedback. This helped to keep me focussed on the importance of the work and keep going with it.’

Feedback form – Year 4 organisation’s comments at the end of the support

The support from development workers was commended as ‘thorough’ and ‘consistent’ by organisations in the interviews and the feedback forms. A number of the organisations felt that the support provided must be demanding and disciplined in order for it to work. In addition to developing a more disciplined way of working, development workers supported organisations to find a way of taking a step back and thinking creatively. Without this intensive, demanding and inspirational support a number of organisations felt that they would not have sustained momentum or fully implemented the quality assurance system. The fact that organisations could not cut corners or put off actions meant that the quality assurance system was fully embedded in the organisation and therefore brought about lasting change. This point is echoed in the interviews with development workers.

A bank of resources

A key factor in the success of the Quality Counts project was the resources including the tools and templates, the training sessions and the quality mark funding. In the interviews the development workers discussed all three types of resources as vital to the success of the project. This is echoed in the feedback collected after training sessions in relation to the tools and templates provided and in terms of the training session itself.

Tools and templates

See appendix D for a full breakdown of the tools and templates used in the Quality Counts project.

'I couldn't do my job without this resource.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'I am really proud of the tools and templates that have been developed. Sharing resources and helping other groups to develop.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'Tool kits and templates help move a group along, otherwise it can be quite overwhelming. You suddenly have hundreds of actions and you are only half way through. These tools allow them to tick off actions and this progress is motivating.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'Great resources, book and handouts.'

Feedback form - Business Planning Masterclass
19/05/2011

'The handouts in particular gave me information that I can take with me and go over again and again, applying to my work.'

Feedback form – Monitoring and Evaluation 09/12/2011

'All aspects were very useful but particularly the tools.'

Feedback form - Business Planning Masterclass
11/06/2012

Training sessions

See appendix E for a full list of the different training courses delivered as part of the Quality Counts project.

Having the budget to say 'You have a gap in that area but we've got great training coming up' – that really reinforces it.

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'The training figures are always high and I think it's because we offer current, useful training for free. I don't know anywhere else offering this.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

In the online survey completed by training participants, 'Resources (including handouts)' were selected as being one of the two aspects of the training that 'stood out the most' to participants. (44.4% of participants gave this response).

I now have a clearer understanding of the benefits of a quality assurance system.
Feedback form - Quality Assurance for Development workers 22/12/11

I understand outcomes now and feel more confident working with it in mind.
Feedback form - Outcomes training 05/02/2009

Quality mark funding

'Having someone external to confirm you are doing a fantastic job is just invaluable.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'We were able to provide funding to 8 organisations and this has made me feel that the last 2 years of the project have been the most transforming.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

Interestingly, there is some disagreement regarding whether the annual Quality Counts event can be considered as essential. One development worker included the event in her response to the interview question about key factors for success, whereas the event was identified as something that could be removed from the project in the other development worker interview. However both development workers agreed that the opportunities provided at the event (the chance to share experiences of quality assurance with other organisations and the resources circulated) are vital; this has been reiterated in the feedback from the events. This is a useful detail to consider when designing future support.

'The event at the end of each year is a key ingredient. It spurs people on. It enables people to see what others are doing, providing an important networking opportunity.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'Events are a luxury and a big cost so, if I had to make a cut, this is something we could make do without because on a day-to-day basis we use all the other resources more. The other elements I don't think we could do without at all.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'The resources we give out are brilliant, such as the Monitoring and Evaluation booklet and the PQASSO workbook that usually costs £95. Having a peer reviewer (who is not involved in the Quality Counts project) available to speak to groups is great. The networking and speakers always inspire groups. To actually meet with groups is more inspiring than speaking to me or another development worker I think because these are other people from groups who've actually been through the process in their group.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

'Hearing other people's experiences of quality standards is very useful.'

Feedback form - Quality Counts launch event 16/10/2008

The speakers made us feel that we could also be successful.

Feedback form - The Road to Quality event 22/02/2011

These key factors for success (willing organisations, thorough support and a bank of resources), in addition to an opportunity to share experiences with peers, are therefore all central to the success and achievements of the project and should be captured in future support.

Limitations

The limitations of the project have been captured from the interviews with organisations and development workers. The most significant limitations are in relation to the restricted capacity of the project; the number of organisations that the project could support, the amount of time that could be offered to each organisation, the reliance on development worker time and the reach of the Quality Counts tools and resources. Whilst the project provided dedicated support to 25 organisations and improved services for over 120,000 users, there may be means of reaching even more organisations and striving for an even greater impact in a future project.

5 organisations supported each year

The Quality Counts project provided dedicated support to five organisations annually to implement a quality assurance system. As discussed above, there were more than five organisations who applied for support in four out of the five years therefore for 80% of the five-year project there were organisations unable to access the support they wished to receive. The development workers discussed this aspect of the project as a limitation in the interviews as well as putting forward the idea of a more flexible system that would allow the support to be responsive.

‘One of the limitations of the project was that there could only be five groups a year. One group applied three times in a row but the third year I had to really encourage them to apply again as it’s disheartening not to be accepted for something more than once. It’s a shame to run it as an application process because there are always going to be groups who are not successful.’ Interview – Salford CVS development worker

‘Some groups need the support more than others. I don’t know if a more flexible system would work better, with a set of criteria where some groups get one-off intervention support and some get more intense support.’ Interview – Salford CVS development worker

The Quality Counts application process gave an indication of whether an organisation was at the best stage in its development to implement a quality assurance system and whether it could make the commitment necessary to take full advantage of the opportunity. If an application process were to be used in the future, there may be some scope to incorporate an initial assessment to allow the support to be planned around the needs of the organisations. This assessment would

potentially require more resources and be more complicated but it could be trialled to assess whether the extra steps at the start may be justified if it allowed future support to benefit more organisations.

Only 8 months of support for each organisation

The timeframes of the Quality Counts project were affected by a delay at the start of the project, therefore each organisation had 8 months of support instead of the 12 months that were originally intended. It is interesting to consider whether this was a limitation to the project and indeed if some organisations may have benefitted from more than 12 months of support. Both of the development workers discussed this as a limitation but added that 8 months was a suitable amount of time for some organisations and that the time pressure was in fact motivating for a number of organisations, which was confirmed by some of the organisations interviewed. For instance, in the feedback forms collected immediately after the support was given, one organisation praised the pace of the support in the feedback forms collected immediately after the support they received in year 4 of the project. One of the four organisations interviewed refers to the strict timescales as a motivating factor that forced the organisation to keep on track and make the most of the one-off, time-limited opportunity.

‘For some groups I think 8 months is enough time but due to the nature of the sector and the diversity of groups it depends. For some it would easily take 2 years and perhaps meeting less often over a longer time period would suit them better. The difficulty has been where groups have needed longer but it's not possible. Life gets in the way, there may be a funding crisis, a staff crisis, a major event and this really throws the timescales. When you're working to a rigid timeframe there are pros and cons. For some groups the timeframe doesn't quite fit. Everything has to be ready in time for the Quality Counts event. For some it works better with a strict deadline, but for some it doesn't.’
Interview – Salford CVS development worker

‘I felt that the Salford CVS team were able to take our charity through the various steps methodically and at a suitable pace.’

Feedback form – Year 4 organisation's comments at the end of the support

‘It gave us a deadline; if it doesn't happen within the year then you've wasted this amazing resource.’

Interview – 42nd Street

‘Timing slipped because of the delay in the first year of the project in getting started. So we were always catching up and we have always been on a back foot. This was a disadvantage for the groups because they only had 8 months rather than a year of support. This extra pressure could have been part of the success in that it forced groups to get through the quality assurance system. However it may have been a smoother ride with the extra time.’

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

The time limitations and indeed the application process acted as motivating factors for some organisations. By investing time in an application process and succeeding

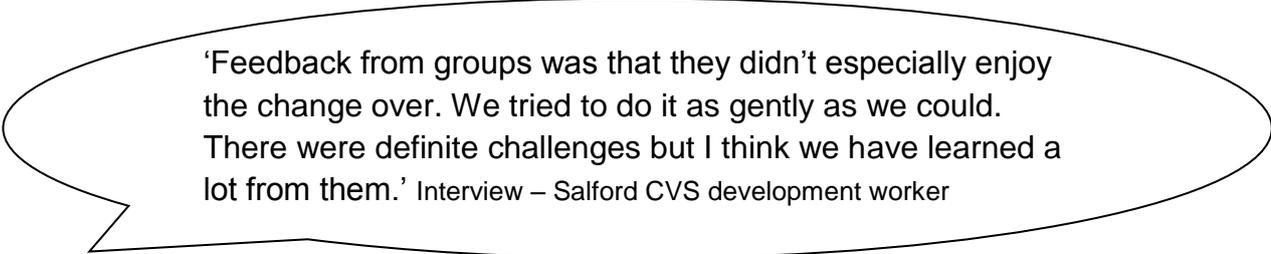
in receiving a time-limited resource, it begins the support with commitment and a 'win' for the organisation. The application process and time-limit can highlight the value of the support on offer, encouraging organisations to take advantage of the opportunity and using the support as motivation.

Therefore the strict timescales of the support can be considered as a limitation, however the pressure of an agreed time limit did work well for some organisations. This will be useful to consider when planning future support.

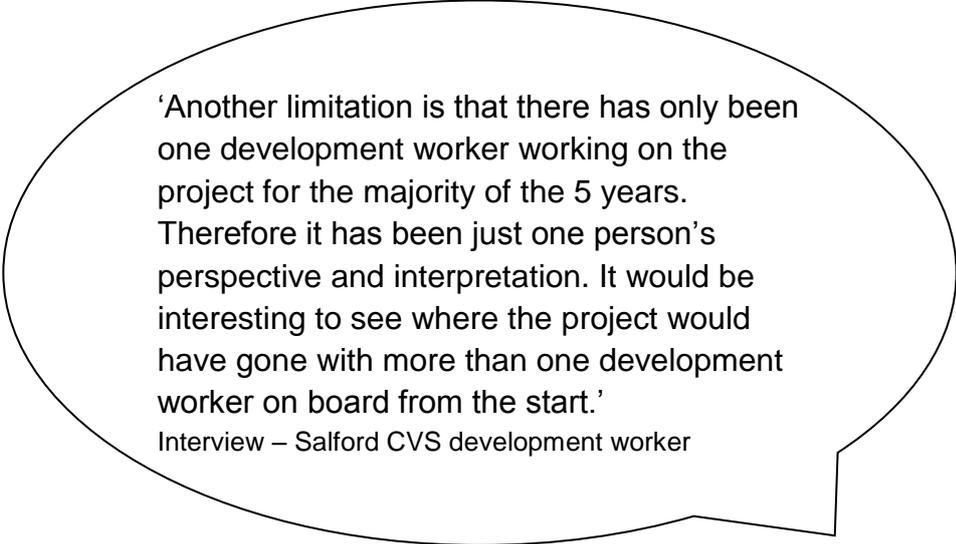
Dependent on intensive development worker time

One of the limitations of the project, particularly in terms of sustainability, is that it is very much reliant on intensive development worker time. This was one of the most substantial resources of the project and amounted to a full-time role for five years and an additional part-time development worker role added in the final two years. In order to provide the thorough support that was evidently a key factor of the project's success the development workers needed to be available to meet with the organisations as frequently as they required, to answer queries without delay and to design resources and training that fully met differing needs. For example one development worker described meeting with an organisation for a full day every week in order to provide training and one-to-one mentoring.

Whilst the development workers described providing this support as an extremely rewarding opportunity, they highlighted the dependence of the project on this resource as a limitation. The challenges of providing support of such an intensive nature were identified in the interviews with development workers and the organisation feedback forms.

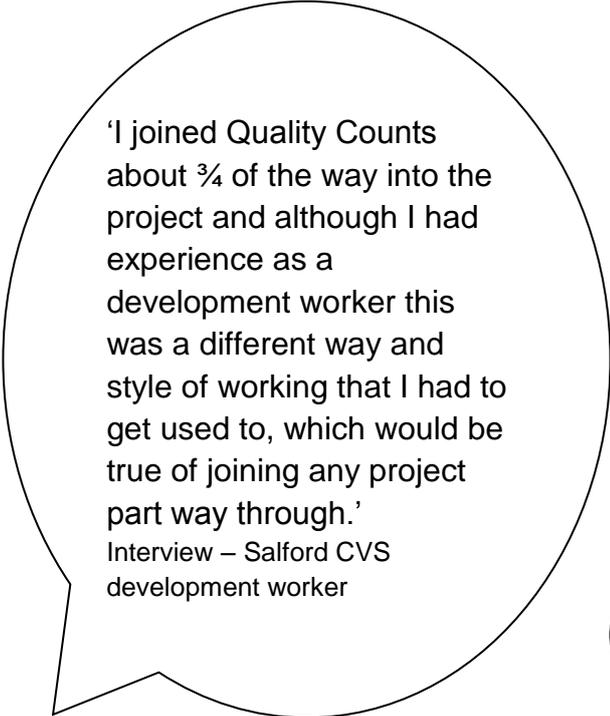


'Feedback from groups was that they didn't especially enjoy the change over. We tried to do it as gently as we could. There were definite challenges but I think we have learned a lot from them.' Interview – Salford CVS development worker



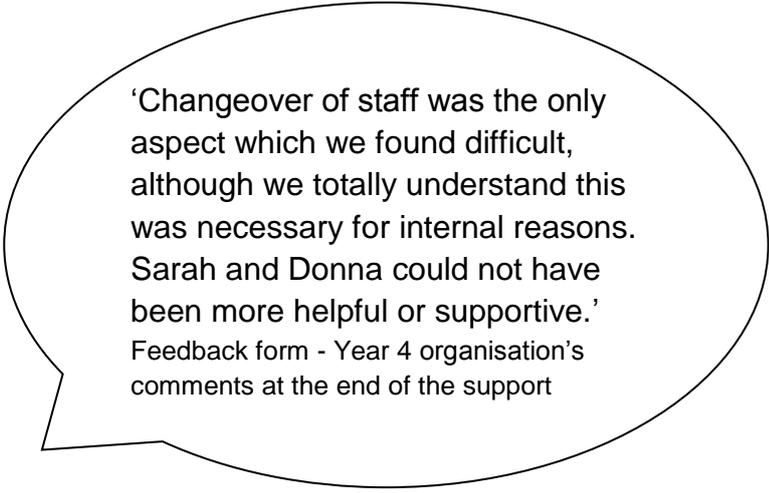
'Another limitation is that there has only been one development worker working on the project for the majority of the 5 years. Therefore it has been just one person's perspective and interpretation. It would be interesting to see where the project would have gone with more than one development worker on board from the start.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker



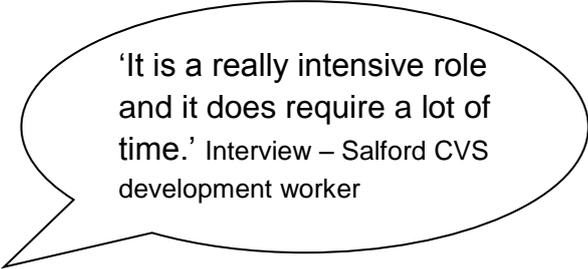
'I joined Quality Counts about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way into the project and although I had experience as a development worker this was a different way and style of working that I had to get used to, which would be true of joining any project part way through.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker



'Changeover of staff was the only aspect which we found difficult, although we totally understand this was necessary for internal reasons. Sarah and Donna could not have been more helpful or supportive.'

Feedback form - Year 4 organisation's comments at the end of the support



'It is a really intensive role and it does require a lot of time.' Interview – Salford CVS development worker

One of the challenges of dealing with this limitation was managing the provision of staff to meet the project's dependence on development worker time. This is discussed in the development worker interviews and the organisation feedback forms. In the fourth year of the project, the role was shared between three development workers due to internal changes. There were benefits to the change, as the added development workers brought additional viewpoints and skills to the project and they were given the opportunity to develop skills in relation to quality assurance, however the change also presented challenges for the development workers and the organisations effected which may have not been necessary had the role not been so reliant on development worker time. For future support to build on the achievements of the Quality Counts project and strive to have an even greater impact, the reliance on development worker time may not be the best use of resources.

The reach of the tools and resources

The tools and resources developed as part of the Quality Counts project have the potential to be one of the greatest aspects that can be taken forward beyond December 2012, however a limitation of the current project model is how they are shared.

The Quality Counts training was an excellent resource that reached almost 500 participants over the five years. However, after the project finishes new participants will not be able to benefit from the learning. Furthermore trainers had to be paid to repeat a number of the same courses during the 5 years in order to meet demand. It could be argued that to have a 'cash rich' project for such a limited period of time is a

disadvantage to the sector, particularly if the tools and resources that were developed are not taken forward along with the wider learning gained from the project. If the training sessions could be recorded in a way that meant the face-to-face course delivery did not have to be repeated and that a greater number could access the training over a longer period of time could be a fantastic and sustainable way of taking the Quality Counts project forward.

One way in which the reach of the tools and resources did have a wider reach was that the training was available to organisations who were not a Quality Counts organisation accessing intensive development worker support. By offering training to organisations who were not one of the 25 Quality Counts organisations, support could still be accessed by organisations for whom implementing a quality assurance system was not yet (or ever) applicable. Future support should be broken down so that organisations can access what they need at a time that suits them. Therefore if they are not ready to implement a quality assurance system yet they can still access support to improve their services.

Organisations relied on development workers to share tools and templates at the face-to-face meetings or by email as follow up to a meeting. This allowed development workers to tailor the support to best suit the Quality Counts organisations, however it meant that organisations were reliant on the development workers and that other organisations were not able to benefit from the tools and templates. The fact that the tools and templates are not available online was discussed in the development worker interviews.

‘Email is used for checking in on groups and to send documents/resources. It is the preferred option for this sort of communication.’

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

‘Most of the Quality Counts resources are not available for groups to access online. I do not use the Quality Counts page of the Salford CVS website; I only use the website to signpost organisations to other sections like the funding or training pages.’

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

The Salford CVS website has been used to promote and manage applications for Quality Counts training and the quality mark funding opportunity, in addition to sharing the achievements of Quality Counts organisations by uploading case studies and news stories. However the only Quality Counts tools and resources that can be accessed online are the info sheets and case studies that serve as an introduction to quality assurance. The Quality Counts website page has had 1913 ‘reads’ (the page has been opened this many times) which is a lower figure than other Salford CVS website pages. This shows that the page is used but that it is a resource that could be made better use of as part of future support.

The development workers confirmed that in between face-to-face meetings the preferred communication method for the majority of the organisations has been email, particularly as it allows the sharing of tools and resources. This indicates that the majority of the Quality Counts organisations are happy to make use of the internet, however any future support should remain accessible to organisations for whom the internet is not an option.

Looking forward: Conclusions and Recommendations

This section will consider the learning highlighted in the analysis above in order to give conclusions and recommendations about future support relating to quality assurance. It is clear that the community and voluntary sector in Salford would continue to benefit from future support and the recommendations will aim to help build on the lasting change that has been brought about by the Quality Counts project.

The interviews, feedback forms and survey included questions that aimed to assess the views of organisations and development workers on possibilities for future support and these views will be used to guide the following recommendations. In addition, this section will refer to information gathered regarding online learning and support. As mentioned in the methodology, Salford CVS staff met with an experienced Learning Technologist in order to assess whether online support may be an option that could realistically be recommended in this report. Questions posed via the interviews, the survey and the meeting with the Learning Technologist were in relation to the limitations of the project as outlined above; the restricted capacity of the project in terms of the number of organisations that the project could support, the amount of time that could be offered to each organisation, the reliance on development worker time and the reach of the Quality Counts tools and resources. This section will also draw on other conclusions identified in the analysis above.

Conclusion

Organisations at different stages of development benefitted from the Quality Counts project, ranging from the organisations who only accessed one training session in five years to the Quality Counts organisations who received months of dedicated support. However a limitation of the Quality Counts project is that the dedicated support was only available to 5 organisations each year.

Recommendation

A more flexible system may be possible that would allow support to be available to more organisations and to be better tailored depending on need.

It is recommended that a system of support is developed that builds on the Quality Counts structure of allowing organisations at different stages in their development to access support. Support should be structured so that organisations can easily access the aspects of the support that they require. If organisations require more in-depth support (similar to the support received by the 25 Quality Counts organisations), it is recommended that their needs are assessed at the start to

estimate how much support they will need. The aim of this system would be to ensure that organisations receive the support they need without unnecessarily reducing the chance of other organisations to receive support simultaneously.

Important points to consider:

- ❖ Resources would be required to assess the needs of organisations.
- ❖ Training and learning is vital to quality assurance therefore this aspect of future support should be of a high-quality.

Conclusion

The time-intensive nature of implementing a quality assurance system was a common challenge for organisations. Furthermore the strict timescales of the support can be considered as a limitation of the Quality Counts project.

Recommendation

Resources should be identified and utilized to support organisations before they begin implementing a quality assurance, as well as during the process. In addition to the resources used by the Quality Counts project, future support could include a more intensive planning stage that will tailor the support to suit the organisation.

It is recommended that a plan of support is agreed upon at the start of the process based on an initial assessment with input from a development worker and the organisation. The aim of a more intensive planning stage would be to:

- ❖ Help organisations better understand what is involved in implementing a quality assurance system.
- ❖ Identify how they can manage common challenges, such as managing quality assurance alongside day-to-day service delivery.
- ❖ Allow the timeframes to be better tailored to suit the organisation, including a time limit. It is recommended that the timeframes are agreed at the start with the understanding that they cannot be majorly adjusted, as this was a key motivating factor for some organisations.

Support should continue to be available throughout the process, as with the Quality Counts project.

Conclusion

The tools and templates developed as part of the Quality Counts project were a key factor to the project's success, however a limitation of the project is that these resources could have a wider reach.

Recommendation

The tools and templates should be brought together into a package of accessible support for organisations to continue to benefit from in the future.

It is recommended that the package of resources is:

- ❖ Branded and formatted consistently so that they are user-friendly and recognise the achievements of the Quality Counts project and those involved in developing them.
- ❖ Shared with organisations online where possible with hard copies also available.
- ❖ Shared amongst development workers so that they can make use of them.
- ❖ Reviewed annually to ensure they are still reflective of best practice and latest legislation.

It is recommended that the package of resources includes tools and templates aimed at:

- ❖ Providing organisations with information about quality assurance, including details of different quality assurance systems.
- ❖ Helping organisations to assess their starting point in terms of quality assurance in order to effectively plan for implementing a quality assurance system.
- ❖ Creating and sustaining buy-in and collective understanding from everyone involved in the organisation.
- ❖ Support the board of trustees and senior managers to manage their responsibility to lead the process of implementing a quality assurance system.
- ❖ Developing or improving policies and procedures.
- ❖ Breaking down the meaning behind the language used by quality assurance systems.

- ❖ Helping organisations to sustain momentum and keep all levels of the organisation engaged in the process.
- ❖ Assisting organisations to manage time effectively.

Conclusion

The Quality Counts project was heavily reliant on development worker input and this may not be the best use of resources for future support.

Recommendation

A more flexible and sustainable option could be developed using tailored development worker support combined with peer support and online support aimed at a greater number of organisations.

Conclusion

The chance to share experiences of quality assurance with other organisations is beneficial, however an annual event may not be the most efficient or sustainable method.

Recommendation

The opportunity for organisations to share their experiences of quality assurance should be built into future support however an online system may be more efficient, sustainable and reach more organisations.

Conclusion

Although there is a clear need for support with quality assurance, the Quality Counts project had to allocate considerable resources to recruit organisations.

Recommendation

The timeframes and resources for any future support should account for a promotion and recruitment process for organisations. This could be in terms of a budget for promotional products and or staff time to research and implement targeted recruitment.

Conclusion

The most popular quality assurance system amongst organisations supported by the Quality Counts project was PQASSO.

Recommendation

Future support should be based on PQASSO but organisations should still have the option of support with other quality assurance systems.

Conclusion

Buy-in and collective understanding was a common challenge for organisations implementing a quality assurance system. Improvements are more likely to last when the benefits of them are clearly evident to a wider audience.

Recommendation

As part of the support at the start of implementing a quality assurance system, organisations should identify an area to focus on first where they could potentially be an 'easy win' that will show an immediate and clear change for staff and volunteers.

Depending on the organisation and the quality assurance system, this recommendation may not always be possible to follow. However where it can be implemented it could potentially make a significant difference to the organisation's progress in implementing a quality assurance system.

To sustain buy-in and collective understanding, future support should contain aspects that are pertinent to people at different levels within an organisation.

Conclusion

Ideally the person leading the process of implementing of a quality assurance system should be a manager with strong backing from the board of trustees. This backing should be consistent throughout the process.

Recommendation

At the start of the process, organisations should be supported to put a clear roles and responsibilities structure into place with all members of the board of trustees and senior managers understanding their responsibilities in relation to quality assurance.

Conclusion

Organisations benefitted from having the opportunity to progress to an externally accredited quality mark, especially as funding to cover the quality mark fees is very rare.

Recommendation

Future support should cater for external accreditation in addition to self-assessment quality assurance systems. This should include work carried out with funders and commissioners.

In order to support organisations who wish to obtain externally accredited quality marks, it is recommended that:

- ❖ Organisations are encouraged to consider the cost of quality assurance in their budgets, including the quality mark fee.
- ❖ The work of the Quality Counts project with funders and commissioners is continued to develop their understanding of what is involved in implementing a quality assurance system and the potential benefits for organisations and their service users. Funders and commissioners who understand that resources required to implement a quality assurance system and the limited funding available for quality marks are more likely to understand that it is unfair to stipulate a particular quality mark as part of a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) or similar assessment of eligibility.

Looking forward: Exploring options for the future

Options discussed in the interviews, the feedback forms and the survey centred around three main areas: peer support, online support and use of information handling technology. There was some cross-over between these three areas, for instance the option of using online support to facilitate a peer support network was discussed.

Consultation with organisations, development workers and specialists such as the Learning Technologist is invaluable when exploring the options for meeting the recommendations put forward above.

Peer support

'Perhaps some way of helping similar charities benchmark against each other and share insight and ideas.'

Feedback form – Year 4 organisation's comments at the end of the support

'Going through other groups would be good but sometimes other groups would not be able to answer as quickly. If there was another resource of support and you were guaranteed that someone would give you an answer that would be good.'

Interview – Salford Link Project

'I am mentoring an organisation in Liverpool about PQASSO now. I have given them support over the phone and we met for about 2 ½ hours. I told them about Quality Counts but they found that there was nothing like it that they could access in Liverpool. It felt important that I was able to share the learning I gained from my mentor so that this support was not wasted and could help more than just myself.

The organisation in Liverpool rings up and asks about a particular bit of evidence. Having someone provide us with a critical eye has helped me to help others and be that critical eye myself.

Peer support would be good or an arena where you could ask the question 'what is meant by this?' Whatever size the organisation is, to hear from someone else that's been through it, how precious is that?

It's time-saving as well having someone external to help with ideas. Someone who can question your organisation who's not attached to it and have nothing to lose, they can question it without challenging peers/colleagues. It's really useful.

It's just a shame that Quality Counts doesn't go again for at least another 3 years, to help people get to the next level. If there was another support mechanism I would definitely buy into that, because you need someone external, a critical eye to say 'that's not what that means' or 'you're evidencing it but it isn't strong enough'.

What really came out of the Quality Counts project was the mentoring support and the confidence it gave me. It really, really built my confidence.'

Interview – 42nd Street

‘Since we have been awarded the PQASSO externally accredited quality mark and we are listed on CES website it has prompted a few other people to get in touch with us to ask our advice. Something like that is quite useful.

We had one organisation who contacted us and we had a teleconference. They picked my brains and discussed things they were having difficulty with. For example I created a template to keep on top of all the different documents and I found that really helpful so I shared it with the organisation and they’ve used that.

An e-learning toolkit would be useful so you could ask all the organisations who have been through the quality assurance system process to sign up to a peer-support system. You couldn’t give them lots of time, maybe just to ask just one or two questions, perhaps via email. You couldn’t offer anything more than that but if it’s just a 10 minute phone call or a couple of emails I don’t think that would be a major issue.’

Interview – Greater Manchester Neurological Alliance

Important points to consider:

- ❖ Peer support has been an effective aspect of the Quality Counts events, where speakers from other organisations have shared their experiences.
- ❖ If a peer support network was created, the ‘branding’ of the Quality Counts project could be an effective tool to bring organisations together.
- ❖ A ‘buddy’ system could be used to pair up organisations to support each other through implementing a quality assurance system. A pilot would be necessary.
- ❖ Organisations are likely to be concerned about the time commitment involved in peer support. Similar to the Quality Counts project, resources would need to be identified to promote and recruit organisations to be involved in peer support.

Online support

'It's really great to have e-learning tools but then it's really useful to talk to people.'

Interview – Greater Manchester Neurological Alliance

'For a Quality Counts group the biggest motivation is meeting with a development worker. A lot of groups say to me that they didn't look at the actions until the day before our meeting. It is the fear almost of these meetings that acts as motivation.'

Interview – Salford CVS development worker

88.8% of past Quality Counts training participants gave a positive response regarding e-learning.
Online survey – Question 5

The advantages of using online support include:

- ❖ Online support can be accessed by a larger number of organisations with less strict time-frames and with less intensive development worker input.
- ❖ Online communication can be easily stored and found for future use. For example an online discussion focussing on a common problem could be accessed by organisations months or even years after the discussion took place. A discussion forum can be used as a 'live' alternative to the traditional 'Frequently Asked Question' page.
- ❖ Events and workshops that are held can be recorded and uploaded to the online system.
- ❖ Online support can cut down on travel time and time spent away from the workplace for organisations and for development workers.
- ❖ Online support could be more easily tailored to suit the organisation's pace.

Important points to consider:

- ❖ Online system would not be suitable for all organisations and it would be important to find ways to make the shared learning accessible to everyone. For example online discussions and information from the online system could be printed on request.
- ❖ It can be difficult to engage people in discussion forums.

- ❖ Online support would require resources to design, set up and maintain.
- ❖ Online support on its own may not be able to motivate or mentor organisations as successfully as the dedicated development worker support provided as part of the Quality Counts project. However if motivational and mentoring online tools were designed and the online support overall was combined with peer support and development worker support this would be more effective. The Learning Technologist advised that e-learning is best when it is mixed with face-to-face teaching.
- ❖ See appendix F for further information about the learning gained from meeting with a Learning Technologist to discuss online support.

Using technology

'Information handling and keeping everything up-to-date is a difficult and lengthy process; and you still have to do your day job. I would recommend using technology as much as possible. Don't just print everything out all the time. Use your scanner for paper documents and keep everything digital. Do an index with hyperlinks to the documents, so they are easy to find, can be updated and importantly you can easily see which the most recent version is by adding a date to the filename.

We stored everything electronically and, instead of using a harddrive, I would put it on an internet storage site so then you don't get the problem of links not working. We submitted our evidence for the externally assessed quality mark on CD.'

Interview – Langworthy Cornerstone Association

An important point to bear in mind is that using technology in this way may not suit all organisations. However, like peer support and online support, it is a valuable option to consider that could potentially be very effective.

Next steps

- The final Quality Counts event in December 2012 is an opportunity to ask past Quality Counts organisations if they would be interested in joining together to create a network of peer support who can support each other continue work to high standards, whilst also supporting new organisations who have not yet benefitted from the support of the project.
- The Quality Counts tools and templates should be brought together in a package of resources before the end of the project ready to take forward and continue the legacy of learning established by the project.
- Salford CVS should seek ways to continue to support organisations to deliver high quality services and implement quality assurance systems. In the meantime a temporary system should be put in place to handle requests for support, perhaps making use of the current Salford CVS development team referral system.
- To pilot online learning and support at Salford CVS. This should ideally take place in the next three months if possible to maximise on the advice and momentum Salford CVS staff gained from meeting with the Learning Technologist.
- Share learning gained from the Quality Counts project by circulating this report at the final Quality Counts event, via the Salford CVS website and internally amongst Salford CVS staff and volunteers.

Appendices

Appendix A

Committed to quality

25 organisations have successfully implemented a quality assurance system, which has improved services for 120,095 users.

2331 PQASSO and Matrix indicators have been met by Salford organisations to back up their passion for making a difference to people's lives.

Quality Counts organisations make up 35% of the PQASSO Quality Mark externally accredited organisations in the North West of England and 50% of the accredited organisations in Greater Manchester.

Understanding quality

46 training sessions have been delivered to 495 participants.

80% of participants have indicated an increase in their confidence, knowledge and skills as a result of attending Quality Counts training.

78% of participants confirmed they have implemented the learning gained from a Quality Counts course in their organisation.

Valuing quality

51 funders and commissioners have received training on quality assurance and 97% noted an increase in their knowledge and understanding.

£8,000 has been awarded to 8 Quality Counts organisations to pay for their PQASSO Quality Mark fees.

Sustainable quality

14 development workers received training designed specifically to provide support to organisations implementing quality.

2 licensed PQASSO Mentors, 2 PQASSO Assessors, 2 Outcomes Champions and 14 development workers skilled-up in quality assurance now exist in Salford.

Appendix B

Online Survey: Response Summary

Key details

- The online survey was open between 13.09.12 and 16.10.12.
- The survey was emailed to 20 attendees of Quality Counts training using Survey Monkey and there was a 45% response rate (9 attendees).
- There were 6 questions and one final section where respondents could enter in their details if they wished to be entered into a prize draw for a £25 training voucher. This was used to encourage people to complete the survey.

Key findings

- The **resources** and **the trainer** were selected as being the two aspects of the training that stood out the most to participants. (44.4% of people made this response to question 2).
- **Group discussion** was rated as the second most outstanding aspect. (33.3% of people made this response to question 2).
- All other aspects of the training received a response as part of question 2 except for 'one-to-one discussion with another participant'.
- The only suggestion for improvement was for there to be more than 3 participants.
- **77.8% of participants have said that they have been able to implement the learning that they gained** from the course since they attended the training.
- **88.8% of participants gave a positive response regarding e-learning.** 44.4% of participants had never tried e-learning but were open to trying it and 44.4% had tried e-learning and found it to be an effective way of learning. Only 11.1% of participants have found that e-learning is not effective for them.

1. Please tick below to indicate which of the following training courses you have attended.

Business Planning	22.2%	2
Monitoring and Evaluation	33.3%	3
Demystifying Incorporation	11.1%	1
Implementing an outcomes framework	0.0%	0
How to fund quality assurance	0.0%	0
The PQASSO Quality Mark workshop	11.1%	1
Implementing PQASSO in your Organisation	22.2%	2
Equality and Diversity	22.2%	2
Quality Assurance for Development Workers	22.2%	2
I don't remember	0.0%	0

2. What stood out to you most about the training you attended?

Group discussion	33.3%	3
One-to-one discussion with another participant	0.0%	0
One-to-one discussion with trainer	11.1%	1
Resources (e.g. handouts)	44.4%	4
Powerpoint presentation	11.1%	1
Tools and techniques	11.1%	1
Exercises	22.2%	2
The trainer	44.4%	4
Examples/anecdotes	22.2%	2
Other	0.0%	0

3. How could the training have been improved?

- It couldn't, it was really good.
- Couldn't
- More participants. There were only 3 of us.

4. Since attending the training, have you been able to implement any of the learning that you gained from the course?

Yes	77.8%	7
No	22.2%	2

- I made sure that all information is up to date and filed for any staff to refer to when required.
- Been very useful in my day to day job.
- Swap analysis.
- I have used the tools and exercises that we did on the courses.
- I have been able to pass my knowledge onto colleagues.

5. Please choose a statement from the list below which best reflects your awareness and experience of e-learning.

I don't really know what it is	11.1%	1
I have never experienced e-learning and I am not interested in it	0.0%	0
I have never experienced e-learning but I am open to trying it	44.4%	4
I have experienced e-learning and it was not an effective way of learning for me	11.1%	1
I have experienced e-learning and it was an effective way of learning for me	44.4%	4
Other	0.0%	0

6. What do you want from future training at Salford CVS?

- Any volunteer information updates.
- An intermediate level about social media as this is growing increasingly important and although we have set up several forms of social media it is the managing of it and getting the most out of it.
- More safeguarding.
- You have quite a good range already.

Appendix C

PQASSO quality mark externally accredited organisations in the North West of England

Organisation name	County where main services are provided	Greater Manchester	Services to Salford people	Salford CVS member	Quality Counts organisation
42nd Street	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1
Autistic Society Greater Manchester Area	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1
Birtenshaw	Greater Manchester	1			
Blackpool Carers Centre	Lancashire				
CALL	Greater Manchester	1	1		1
Cheshire Carers Centre	Cheshire				
Child Action Northwest	Lancashire (supporting people across North West)	1	1	1	
Early Break	Greater Manchester and Lancashire	1			
George House Trust	Gtr Manchester (supporting people across North West)	1	1	1	
Greater Manchester Neurological Alliance	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1
Hibbert Community Regeneration Agency Ltd	Greater Manchester	1	1		
Langworthy Cornerstone Association	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1
Lower Kersal Centre	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1
Manchester Carers Centre	Greater Manchester	1			
Maundy Relief	Lancashire				
Outreach Community and Residential Services	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1
Princess Royal Trust for Carers (Crossroads merged with The Princess Royal Trust for Carers in April 2012)	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1
Progress	Lancashire				
South Lakeland Carers	Cumbria				
Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC)	Greater Manchester	1			
The Foxton Centre	Lancashire				
The Interlink Foundation	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	
Together Trust	Cheshire				
		16	12	10	8

Appendix D

Quality Counts tools, templates and resources

Item	Main purpose	Development worker comments
The Road to Quality booklet	Marketing tool to attract organisations to various parts of the project including training and development worker support. Information tool used to respond to development team referrals. Also used to increase understanding amongst funders and commissioners.	Useful throughout the project. Clearly lays out advantages of quality assurance systems, what organisations can get out of them and what is available.
Health Checks	Used to assess a base line of quality and to check that the aims of the organisation are realistic in terms of the level they have selected in their chosen quality assurance system.	<p>Very important tool; this is always used at the start when supporting an organisation. It can be useful to highlight which section to start with first when supporting an organisation through a quality assurance system.</p> <p>Described as most useful tool in motivating organisations because, in addition to highlighting gaps, it can show to groups what they do have in place. This can be reassuring which is good as a lot of groups feel quite daunted at the start and the health check 'sets people up, sets the tone for rest of the support'.</p>
Toolkits	Used if there is an indicator or area of a quality assurance system that the organisation does not meet. For example to develop or improve a health and safety policy.	Development workers felt they could not do their job without this resource. Toolkits need regular updating in terms of legislation and keeping refreshed on policies and systems.
Info sheets	Used for advertising/marketing of the Quality Counts project and to inform those who have not started their quality journey yet about quality assurance systems.	<p>Useful tool. This is one of the few items currently uploaded to the Salford CVS website.</p> <p>One of the development workers commented that the info sheets and other templates would benefit from being formatted and branded so that there is a set of consistent model templates.</p>

Templates	Like the toolkits, these are used if there is an indicator or area of a quality assurance system that the organisation does not meet.	<p>The templates have been developed as part of the Quality Counts project. They have been collected over time throughout the project, some from previous Quality Counts organisations who have put together a document that is especially good.</p> <p>There are some templates that more groups need, such as a template financial procedure. The template used throughout the project was originally developed with a Year 1 organisation.</p> <p>Templates need regular updating in terms of legislation and keeping refreshed on policies and systems.</p>
Planning tools, e.g. overall action plan, evidence folders (evidence records and action plans)	Details the process of implementing a quality assurance system.	These were described as 'vital', 'invaluable' and 'bread and butter of whole project'. It is important to look back and view previous versions of the evidence records and action plans. Creating an overall action plan helps keep on top of everything that needs to be completed.
Training resources	Used to deliver training. Include quizzes, checklists and templates.	Very useful. Groups respond really well to these resources. Implementing PQASSO for example could otherwise be a dry course.
Salford CVS Quality Counts website pages	Used at the start or at the end of each Quality Counts year as a marketing tool.	Good for signposting for a group thinking about accessing support from Quality Counts or generally wanting to know more about implementing a quality assurance system. One development worker only used the website pages in terms of promoting Quality Counts training.
Case studies	Used to reflect on the organisation's achievements at the end of each year of the project. Used as a marketing tool.	Good for signposting for a group thinking about accessing support from Quality Counts. This is one of the few items currently uploaded to the Salford CVS website.

Appendix E

Quality Counts training. A number of the courses listed below were repeated throughout the five years of the project.

Demystifying Quality
Action Learning Set workshop
Business Planning Masterclass
Commissioning Perspectives
Delivering Quality
Demystifying incorporation
Equality and Diversity
How to fund quality assurance
How to write your organisation's outcomes
Implementing an outcomes framework
Implementing PQASSO in your organisation
Intensive workshop for Children's Services and Work Skills
Introducing quality assurance for development workers
Monitoring and Evaluation
Outcomes
Show me the money for quality assurance
Social return on investment
The PQASSO quality mark

Appendix F

Online learning and support training with Learning Technologist Tony Lowe, Director at Webducate on 21st November 2012.

Participant feedback

100% of Salford CVS staff who met with the Learning Technologist felt their knowledge, confidence and skills of e-learning had increased.

Have you any other comments that you wish to make?

- An excellent course. I feel like I learnt loads.
- It was very useful to see how this can be incorporated into our work. However the applications did appear quite difficult to master.
- This was a fantastic opportunity to learn from someone who is very experienced with e-learning and could help us think about the best way to use it at Salford CVS.
- It was really interesting training and something that could revolutionise our own training delivery.

Which aspects of the training did you find most useful and why?

- It opened my eyes to the potential of e-learning.
- The afternoon session when we trialled different software and packages to generate e-learning materials.
- Seeing how easy e-learning is once you have mastered the programmes. This could be a very useful tool indeed.
- It was really helpful to have the time built in for discussions with colleagues about how we could use e-learning tools, with guidance and advice from Tony. At the end it was great to be able to finalise our plan and agree on follow-up actions for an e-learning pilot. Hopefully this will help us sustain our momentum with e-learning. The opportunity to try out different software was very valuable too.
- Considering why to use e-training for CVS. Learning how to use Articulate Studios – and that it doesn't have to be that hard!