

**Shephard &
Moyes Ltd**

**PLAN
DO
REVIEW**

London Youth

Quality Mark

Evaluation report Summary – November 2015



JOHN LYON'S CHARITY

Foreword

London Youth

For young people to thrive, grow in skills and confidence, build strong networks and have fun, it is essential that what they experience in the space outside of the family and school is high quality, focused on their needs, and supports them in genuinely positive ways.

The London Youth Quality Mark is our way of supporting youth workers and organisations to ensure that their practice, processes and provision are the best and most appropriate they can be for the young people they engage. Over the last 7 years we've helped over 200 organisations across London to achieve accreditation through the Quality Mark. During that time we've updated the standard, and with our partners City & Guilds and Ambition, have done our best to keep the framework valid and relevant.

Now, involving the organisations we work with and a range of other stakeholders, we have taken the step of evaluating the impact and value of the quality mark, to ensure that it reflects not only best practice, but also the ever changing pattern of young people's needs. This report presents the outcome of that process of evaluation.

Some highlights of what is in the main an extremely positive evaluation include:

- Youth workers feel more proud of their work, and more confident that they can make a difference to young people having gone through the Quality Mark accreditation process*
- Achieving the Quality Mark has helped many organisations attract new funding – in some cases at significant levels*
- The process of gathering evidence and preparing for assessment helps organisations to open up new partnership and delivery opportunities*

For us there was also some learning about what we could do better: the reaccreditation process needs to evolve; the way we engage young people in the assessments requires broader thought; and we need to better use new technology for gathering and storing evidence. All of these are helpful pointers. A final crucial piece of learning is the need for further external recognition of and investment in the Quality Mark, and those organisations who achieve it. The John Lyon's Charity through their long-term support, and the City Bridge Trust through the hugely valuable cash incentive they offer to clubs achieving the silver or gold standard have led the way.

We want more funders to reward and recognise the Quality Mark as a badge of excellence; and more local authorities to recognise it as a mark of high quality provision. The funding environment is tough for youth organisations – and so it is vital that funders invest scarce resources in work that will have the most chance of offering effective support to young people. We hope that this positive evaluation persuades more funders and local authorities to commit their support.

I would like to thank The John Lyon's Charity for generously funding this evaluation and believing in the value of good youth work; and Shephard & Moyes for their excellent and sensitive work in consulting organisations and for writing this report. And of course we extend a huge thanks to the many youth workers in London who've worked hard to achieve the Quality Mark and continue to achieve amazing outcomes for young Londoners.



Jim Minton

Director of Membership and Communications, London Youth

John Lyon's Charity

John Lyon's Charity is a grant-giving charity that awards grants for the benefit of children and young people. We have supported London Youth to develop and deliver the Quality Mark since 2011. As a funder of youth provision across nine London boroughs, we champion organisations that deliver high quality work, so that young people can achieve the best possible outcomes. We are proud that 38 organisations in the Charity's Beneficial Area are currently accredited with the London Youth Quality Mark, and that a further 25 are engaged in the process.

We know that youth organisations that achieve the London Youth Quality Mark are well-placed to provide excellent services that have a lasting effect on communities. This evaluation confirms the Quality Mark's value to youth clubs as they report feeling more financially sustainable and with a greater sense of confidence, morale and pride in the work they deliver.

A tool such as the Quality Mark, which meets the needs of youth clubs and youth work providers at a time when resources are increasingly scarce, is critical. John Lyon's Charity is proud to lead the way and hopes that other funders will recognise the rigour and hard work that youth clubs undertake to achieve the qualification, and the significance it holds as a trusted badge of excellence.



Susan Whiddington
Chair of the Grants Committee of John Lyon's Charity

November 2015

Executive Summary

London Youth supports a network of around 400 community youth organisations across London. As part of its membership support package it has developed the Quality Mark, which aims to support member clubs to improve both front line delivery and organisational effectiveness. It aims to assist organisations to provide the highest standards of service and activities that are needed by young people. It provides clubs with a 'badge' of excellence they can use to prove they are doing the most they can to transform lives. The Quality Mark has been produced in partnership with Ambition UK and is accredited by City & Guilds. John Lyon's Charity provides core funding to London Youth for pay for the management and administration of the Quality Mark, and City Bridge Trust currently provides a financial incentive for clubs to complete the Silver and Gold levels.

Shephard & Moyes Ltd was appointed in early 2015 to evaluate the Quality Mark. The aim of the evaluation was to review the framework and process, make an assessment of the value of the Quality Mark and consider how the Quality Mark could be reshaped to deliver more benefits.

This summary report presents the results of our research, which consisted of an e-survey with clubs, interviews with clubs, London Youth staff and wider stakeholders and visits to a small number of clubs. It incorporates a process evaluation, impact evaluation and translates the learning into a set of broad recommendations and actions for London Youth to take the Quality Mark forward.

London Youth members come in many shapes and sizes and not all members would describe themselves as a club. However, for the purposes of this report this has been used as a generic term.

About the Quality Mark

The Quality Mark was first developed in 2006/07 and piloted between 2007 and 2010. During this period London Youth started to work with City & Guilds who provide external accreditation of the award. Between 2010 and 2012 further developments to the Quality Mark were made, as London Youth started to work with Ambition to make the award available nationally. During this period London Youth were successful in being awarded funding from John Lyon's Charity to pay for core running costs of the Quality Mark. The John Lyon's Charity are also an important advocate for the Quality Mark, encouraging clubs they fund to apply and trying to encourage other funders to do the same.

In 2014 a new team started at London Youth and the Quality Mark was integrated with other training opportunities and now forms part of the Membership Development team. Since 2014 the process has been streamlined, with the development of Getting Started meetings, check-in meetings when clubs are 80% ready, and a move away from intensive one to one support for a small number of clubs, to more reactive support and a focus on encouraging a greater number of clubs to engage.

Clubs can achieve three levels within the Quality Mark; Bronze, Silver and Gold. The Bronze award focuses on the policies and procedures clubs need to have in place to ensure they are operating legally and safely. Silver focuses more on the opportunities provided to

young people, as well as the training and support provided to staff and volunteers. The Gold award is a badge of excellence which focuses on providing evidence that the club is committed to continuous improvement and involves young people at all levels. It is expected that all clubs who are members of London Youth work towards the Bronze award as a minimum. For clubs who progress to Silver and Gold there is currently a financial incentive, provided by the City Bridge Trust.

Once clubs become members and express an interest in applying for the Quality Mark they attend a Getting Started meeting, where they find out more about the Quality Mark, what is involved and receive a copy of the folder which contains all the indicators needed to achieve the award. They then collect evidence to meet the standards; this is normally provided in hard copy format, but there are options to create a virtual folder of evidence in applications like Dropbox, although the folder itself is only available in hard copy. Once clubs feel they are 80% through the process they arrange a check-in meeting with the Quality Mark team, where their evidence is reviewed and a judgement made as to how ready for assessment the club is. The assessment takes the form of a visit to the club. This is normally in office hours so clubs are often not delivering activities. The visit comprises a review of the evidence and a discussion with the Quality Mark lead from the club. As part of the Gold assessment a young person will also visit the centre, to experience the centre from a young person's perspective and to provide a mechanism for young people to engage in the process.

A decision is made at the visit as to whether the club has achieved the award, and following the assessment clubs are sent an action plan to enable them to move to the next level or address any weaknesses.

After holding the Quality Mark for three years clubs must go through a renewal process, which currently requires clubs to assemble a new folder of evidence for the whole award.

About the clubs

Based on data held on current Quality Mark holders, as at July 2015 89 clubs hold a current award; 58 clubs have achieved Bronze, 13 have achieved Silver and 18 have achieved Gold. A further 138 have received a Quality Mark folder, but it is currently unclear as to the current status of these clubs; better tracking data will help London Youth to identify clubs who have stalled or who may need more support to achieve it.

On average 20% of members in each London borough hold the Quality Mark, although there is considerable variation between boroughs, and 6 boroughs currently don't have any member clubs holding the Quality Mark. London Youth are targeting boroughs to encourage greater take-up and understanding the reasons why some boroughs are under-represented would be useful when putting in place methods to encourage greater engagement.

Our survey showed that there is a good spread of club sizes engaging in the Quality Mark; 10% employ no paid staff and 34% employ more than 10 members of staff. This indicates that the Quality Mark is accessible for all clubs, regardless of their size.

The majority of clubs have engaged more than one person in the Quality Mark process, which shows commitment at different levels of the organisation. Clubs working towards

Silver and Gold involve a greater range of people in the process and clubs moving beyond Bronze are establishing greater commitment at Board/trustee level. Learning from other Quality Mark evaluations indicates that involvement at all levels of the organisation is critical to embedding a culture of continuous improvement, as such it may be appropriate to include in the guidance who and how different members of the organisation could be involved.

The majority (71%) of clubs do not hold any other Quality Marks, indicating that the London Youth Quality Mark is encouraging organisations to consider quality standards who would not otherwise do so. Those that do hold PQASSO, Investors In People or Investors in Volunteers or other sport or activity specific standard. Clubs that hold other quality awards say that the London Youth quality mark is comparable in terms of the time and resources it takes to complete the process, 95% say London Youth is better or the same in terms of the support provided and 55% say the benefits are greater than other Quality Marks. The London Youth Quality Mark is also felt to serve a different purpose to others, recognising that it focuses on driving up standards of youth work.

Process evaluation

The most popular reasons for applying for the Quality Mark are related to extrinsic motivators; external recognition, access to funding and providing an independent 'badge' of quality. However, over half of clubs (56%) chose to apply for the Quality Mark as a means to improve what they do, and 90% of clubs surveyed agreed that the Quality Mark encouraged them to improve what they do; so although this may not be a primary motivator in most cases the Quality Mark is resulting in changes in what clubs do. Many clubs also spoke about their desire to be (or be perceived to be) more professional.

Overall clubs were very satisfied with the Quality Mark process, with all elements scoring between 8 and 8.9 out of 10 on average. Clubs were most satisfied with the helpfulness and support of London Youth staff, and the communication provided throughout the process. Although still scoring an average of 8 out of 10, clubs were least satisfied with the information provided beforehand.

"It was an interesting experience: you could almost call it fun!"

London Youth uses Net Satisfaction Scores (NSS) as a way of comparing satisfaction across all areas of their work. All of London Youth's services are rated using four standard categories; experience, engagement, support and barriers. We mapped these criteria against the survey questions to calculate Net Satisfaction Scores. The overall Net Satisfaction Score for the Quality Mark was 44.94% which is very good and one of the highest within London Youth's services (a positive score is considered to be good and 50% or above is excellent). The highest NSS related to how London Youth engages clubs (by being helpful and supportive), at 57.5%, and the lowest NSS related to removing barriers to engaging (information provided beforehand and the Getting Started meeting), which at 30% is still a good result.

From our discussions with clubs and stakeholders most felt that the indicators were appropriate; 85% agreed that the Quality Mark measures the 'right things' and 67% agreed that the standard reflected what was important to young people. Most clubs agreed that the standards were relevant and appropriate quality measures for what they do, however some

clubs and stakeholders felt that the Quality Mark could be enhanced by including indicators on measuring impact and carrying out evaluation.

“It was very appropriate for the work we do – some things look like they might not be relevant, and sometimes it’s hard to capture the evidence. But that’s the work we needed to do. It can be frustrating, but it’s worth it”

Clubs were also satisfied with the three levels, feeling that they showed appropriate progression and were pitched at the right level.

“The standards are appropriate. Having the progression is useful and it is good the silver and gold are more young people focused”

The majority of clubs (72%) agreed that the type/level of evidence needed is appropriate, although a number felt there is some duplication across the folders. Although clubs were conscious of the time needed to collect the evidence, 79% felt that the time/resources needed to achieve the award was appropriate, with most clubs accepting that although onerous, this was to be expected. However, many clubs said that it took them longer than they expected, and more information about this at the start would be useful.

Some clubs and stakeholders were also keen to see other ways of collecting evidence, with some (but not all) keen to see an on-line system to upload evidence and find resources and guidance on how to achieve the standard.

It was also felt that the standards of evidence could be widened to include observation and/or interview, rather than just focusing on paper evidence. It was felt that the current assessment visits were a missed opportunity to add value to the process; building in session observation and interviews/discussions with staff, volunteers and young people would build a better picture of how the club runs and provide additional evidence to help meet the standard.

Gold standard clubs also felt that the young assessor visit was of limited use and the general view is that other ways of involving young people (from the club as well as from London Youth’s young people’s forum) would help raise awareness of the Quality Mark amongst young people.

Most clubs were complimentary about the support provided by London Youth, however felt that more information could be provided beforehand and some want more support during the process. Although it is important that clubs own the process themselves, some clubs need more support to enable them to achieve the award, although more resources will be needed to do this. Clubs also want more resources, signposting to training, mentoring support from successful clubs and standard policy templates.

“It’s important to have support from London Youth staff – the relationship that’s developed is very productive. They are professional but supportive. But going through the whole thing is daunting – it would be good to have it reviewed...or more meetings to see the difference as we go along”

Currently 20% of clubs have been through the re-accreditation process. Many clubs we spoke to were surprised to hear that they would need to start from scratch after 3 years and

most said that they won't do this as they don't have the resources and/or wouldn't see any additional benefit from being re-accredited. It's important that clubs aren't seen to be 'dropping out' of the Quality Mark, so London Youth need to find a way of developing a re-accreditation process that adds value, whilst ensuring that the rigour of the assessment is maintained.

Impact evaluation

The survey asked clubs to rate themselves against 5 outcomes, both before engaging in the Quality Mark and now, as a result of their engagement. Overall 78% of clubs have shown a positive change against at least one of the outcomes. As a result of the Quality Mark:

- 81% of clubs now have some formal continuous improvement process in place
- The proportion of clubs who have a range of methods to promote what they do and/or are well known has increased from 54% to 73% of clubs
- As a result of the Quality Mark 84% of clubs now have a robust, regularly reviewed set of policies in place
- High level involvement of young people has shifted from something that only half of clubs did before engaging in the Quality Mark, to something that 69% of clubs do now

The Quality Mark has also helped to motivate staff/volunteers, helped generate funding and increased clubs' influence with local stakeholders. It has also helped clubs network with others.

"I think it will encourage a culture of continuous improvement, improve our ability to generate funding, help young people take more pride in their club, help us network/share good practice and improve our credibility with parents/carers"

"We secured £38k in funding and then had to submit a 9 page due diligence spreadsheet. We had the best rating amongst any groups applying and some groups had to turn down the funding as they couldn't meet the criteria. We were only in this position due to having recently completed the Bronze award"

Clubs that have celebrated and promoted the award feel that it matters to their young people, but most felt that having the Quality Mark didn't make a difference to young people or parent/carer choices about which clubs to attend. Finding ways to involve young people from the clubs in the assessment process may help to raise awareness and value of the award more.

To be truly beneficial, the Quality Mark needs to be widely understood and valued by clubs and funders alike. Although quality systems are valued by funders and commissioners, not much is known about the London Youth Quality Mark, outside the clubs and funders who currently use it. Clubs are keen for London Youth to take the lead in raising awareness of the Quality Mark. They see London Youth's role as encouraging greater take up from other clubs, promoting successful clubs and lobbying funders to make the Quality Mark a pre-requisite for funding. Clubs also recognised that they also have a responsibility to promote the Quality Mark; some currently do a lot whereas others currently do little. London Youth

could support clubs to promote the Quality Mark by providing advice and support post-award.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall the Quality Mark is a positive experience for the majority of clubs; regardless of the reason for engaging the Quality Mark is meeting clubs' needs and the vast majority have seen some improvements as a result. Overall satisfaction is high, however improvements to the information provided beforehand would help break down barriers to engagement. Clubs have seen tangible benefits in terms of improved policies and access to funding, but also intangible benefits such as increased morale, confidence and pride. Many clubs feel more professional and feel that having the Quality Mark makes stakeholders and funders perceive them differently, which is a major benefit of holding the award. However, there is a clear need to raise the profile of the Quality Mark amongst clubs and funders; achieving a critical mass of support and awareness will result in it being a recognised award.

It is clear that overall the Quality Mark is achieving its objectives and there are no major concerns with the way it works. Instead of identifying weaknesses, the evaluation has instead highlighted some areas that can move the Quality Mark from good to excellent:

- Enhancing support for clubs
- Simpler ways of collecting evidence – e.g. through an online tool to make the Quality Mark interactive as well as easier to upload evidence
- Improving management information on clubs to monitor progress
- Review the re-accreditation process to ensure it adds value and be robust without going over old ground
- Ensuring that the assessment visits add value by incorporating other standards of evidence (e.g. observation of sessions, interviews with staff, volunteers and young people)
- Ensuring that young people are involved in a more meaningful way
- Supporting clubs to promote the benefits and influencing stakeholders/funders
- Encourage clubs to measure the impact of what they do, and embed evaluation within the Quality Mark process to continue to reflect on what works well and not so well

“The whole experience has been really positive. We are much more up to date with policies etc.; it has been invaluable having the push to do that. It’s been really good being able to share with project volunteers and also colleagues in other departments what we’re doing. It has encouraged a more coherent approach to service delivery. The opportunities for staff development / funding opportunities have been thick and fast. I’m currently on the leadership and management training course delivered by London Youth, and one of our volunteers is about to go on FA training, and we’ve been recommended to Access Sport by London Youth and are now in the process of getting £4,000 to run a football project.”