



Partnership development

Quality assessment endorsement programme: programme information

We have a programme of endorsing a certain type of quality assessment system produced by and for the charitable sector. This programme is part of our Partnership Strategy, which you can read about on our website:

- Our partnership strategy

Some of these systems are specific for use by members of particular federations or networks. Other systems are more widely available, so it is open to any charity to consider having a quality assessment using a system endorsed by us.

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A. Endorsement questions and answers

What is endorsement?

We use the term 'endorsement' to mean a particular type of visible support we give to a product or service of another organisation (usually a charity).

An endorsed product is one we are confident not just to signpost to but actively to promote. Before endorsing a product, we will check its quality and impose certain terms and conditions. These include a time limit on the endorsement. Currently we only endorse quality assessment systems created by the charitable sector for charities.

How do we know that the Commission has endorsed a product?

We allow endorsed products to carry a special endorsement badge - see section E.

What is a quality assessment system?

We use this term to refer to a process which uses a set of quality standards to test the governance and other activities of charities. For an overview of quality assessment systems see our guidance:

- [Quality Assessment Systems guidance](#)

What are quality standards?

Quality standards are a way of describing what a well-run organisation looks like, usually for the purpose of carrying out an assessment of that organisation.

Standards usually cover a range of activities, such as trustee board management, financial planning and reporting, and service delivery. Each standard is usually accompanied by a number of 'indicators' which help explain the kind of evidence an organisation would need to provide to demonstrate that it was meeting a particular standard.

Our guidance [Hallmarks of an Effective Charity \(CC10\)](#) is very similar to a set of quality standards. Under each hallmark are a number of indicators which explain how a charity would demonstrate that it meets the hallmark.

For more information, see the guidance on our website on quality assessment systems.

Does the Commission undertake quality assessments itself?

No. The assessments are undertaken by, or on behalf of, the body which sets and manages the quality assessment system. We have no role in the assessments or the decisions to pass or fail a charity.

Can the Commission endorse all quality assessment systems?

No. Only certain types of systems meet our requirements.

Key requirements for our endorsement include:

- the system must be produced by and for the charitable sector
- the standards must cover the legal requirements for charities
- the standards must cover all the activities of a charity, not just part of them
- the standards must be consistent with our [Hallmarks of an Effective Charity \(CC10\)](#)
- there has to be an assessment process independent of the charity being assessed - self assessment on its own is not enough
- the assessments must include site visits

How do you apply for endorsement?

There is an application pack which sets out all the information you need to decide if a quality assessment system is eligible to be endorsed, and the steps you need to take. You can find it on our website:

- [Endorsement - application pack](#)

Does the Commission endorse the charities which either produce or use the quality assessment system?

No. We never endorse or approve organisations. We endorse the system which is being used to undertake the assessments.

What relationship does the Commission have with bodies whose products it endorses?

We only endorse products belonging to our partners. We provided practical support to our partners to help them deliver their services and products. However, the relationship we have with a charity which is our partner does not affect our powers to regulate it or to intervene to protect its assets or beneficiaries. For more information, see:

- [Our partnership strategy](#)

How long does the Commission's endorsement last?

Usually no more than four years. We may extend this for short periods in exceptional circumstances.

Can the Commission withdraw its endorsement?

Yes - if the body managing the quality assessment system fails to meet our terms and conditions.

What happens to charities which have been using an endorsed quality assessment system if the Commission withdraws its endorsement?

It depends. We will always withdraw our endorsement badge and support from a product in these circumstances. However, we may not always insist on our badge being withdrawn from promotional materials used by charities that have passed a quality assessment.

Charities which have passed a quality assessment under an endorsed system are allowed to use our endorsement badge in conjunction with material promoting the system. This is intended to show that the charity has been quality assessed using an endorsed process.

If, for example, we have withdrawn our endorsement of the system because of concerns about the standard of the assessment process, it is probable that we would also withdraw the use of our logo by charities which have been through that process.

If we have withdrawn our endorsement for some other reason, which does not relate to the quality of past assessments, then it is possible we would allow charities which have been assessed successfully to continue using the endorsement badge.

We will make our decision based on the facts of the case.

What should I do if I think that a charity which has been assessed as meeting the standards is actually failing to meet them?

It depends. Not all complaints about a charity are for us to deal with. However, if you think the issue is about a serious risk of harm to the charity, you should read our guidance:

- [Complain about a charity](#)

In most cases you should first raise your concerns with the charity itself. If you are not satisfied with the charity's response, contact the body which manages the quality assessment system.

Only contact us if:

- you are not satisfied with the response you get from the quality assessment body
and
- the quality assessment system is one we endorse

If you are not satisfied with the response you get from the quality assessment body, you should email us a copy of your correspondence to:

- qualityassessment@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

We will tell you whether your complaint is one that is appropriate for us to raise with the charity or quality assessment body.

What should I do if I think that an organisation is using the Commission's endorsement logo when it is not entitled to?

Please let us know by contacting us at: qualityassessment@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

Which quality assessment systems have been endorsed by the Commission?

You can see an up-to-date list on our website of [endorsed systems](#), plus contact information.

B. Overview of the endorsement programme

We will endorse a certain type of quality assessment system produced by and for the charitable sector. To achieve our endorsement a system's standards, procedures and policies have to meet our rigorous terms and conditions.

Endorsed quality assessment systems have these characteristics:

1. the standards are consistent with the our *Hallmarks of an Effective Charity* (CC10)
2. the assessment process is undertaken independently of the charity being assessed
and
3. the assessment process is robust, transparent and fair

Amongst other things, the body which is offering the assessment system has demonstrated to us that:

- its assessments are a proper and comprehensive test of good governance, including legal compliance and financial management and planning
- its assessors have appropriate training
- there is consistency in the assessment and verification processes
- charities being assessed will automatically fail if they are not meeting certain mandatory requirements (including their legal obligations as charities)

and

- there are policies in place to remove or suspend a quality mark from a charity which significantly fails to maintain the standards

Our endorsement lasts for no more than four years. There are two levels of endorsement, each with its own Commission endorsement badge.

Please note:

- We never endorse charities.
- We never carry out quality assessments. These are done by or on behalf of the organisation which offers the quality assessment system.

C. What Levels 1 and 2 endorsements mean

We offer two levels of endorsement. This recognises the fact that not all charities have the capacity to achieve the same standards in all aspects of their management. For example:

- smaller or newer charities may not be as well-resourced to have the same procedures in place as larger charities
- charities which have only just started using quality assessment may need time to build up the expertise and processes over time

However, this definitely does not mean that smaller or newer charities cannot aspire to, or achieve, higher standards.

Some quality assessment systems may award at one or more levels of achievement. Any system wishing to get our endorsement must meet, as a minimum, our Level 1 requirements.

Level 1 endorsement

An effective charity with the characteristics of sound governance and practice.

Quality assessments using standards meeting our Level 1 endorsement are aiming to test if a charity is effectively managed, and meeting certain minimum requirements. A charity cannot be awarded a pass at this level if it does not demonstrate that it has the following minimum governance characteristics:

- compliance with the relevant legal frameworks, including charity accounting and reporting
- properly appointed, eligible trustees with relevant skills
- planning and risk management processes
- policies for protecting vulnerable beneficiaries (where relevant)
- equality and diversity
- transparency and accountability

Level 2 endorsement

An effective charity with the characteristics of good governance, and displaying a wide range of good practice.

Quality assessments using standards meeting our Level 2 endorsement are aiming to test if a charity is significantly more than effectively managed, and is meeting a much larger number of minimum requirements. A charity cannot be awarded a pass at this level if it does not demonstrate that it has the following governance characteristics:

- meets all level 1 governance requirements
- integral strategic planning (business and financial)
- trustee induction and training

- regular reviews of governance, structure and process
- board performance assessed
- ongoing improvement and innovative ways of working
- leadership in supporting the charitable sector through sharing, collaboration or partnership

Other things to know

- the endorsement badge **never** indicates our endorsement or approval of a charity
- the endorsement of quality standards normally lasts for four years*

and

- a charity can continue to use our endorsement badge on material promoting its achievement of the standards beyond the date of our endorsement of the quality assessment system (but for no longer than four years after it was assessed)

* There may be exceptional circumstances where we agree to an extension.

D. Applying for quality assessment endorsement

Our endorsement of quality assessment systems is not a formality. It is a demanding process which allows us to exercise quality control over a product to which we are lending our name and reputation. If you are thinking of applying for our endorsement, please allow plenty of time to prepare your quality standards to meet our requirements.

Requirements for endorsement

Our requirements cover four areas:

- **Eligibility criteria:** whether your system has the basic characteristics to be eligible for endorsement
- **Governance criteria:** whether your system has the right processes and procedures in place
- **Coverage criteria:** whether your system comprehensively assesses charities against standards which are consistent with the Commission's *Hallmarks of an Effective Charity (CC10)*
- **Terms of endorsement:** the conditions your organisation has to agree to if we endorse your system

Application pack

You have to make an application using the [application pack](#).

Unless we endorsed the previous version of your system, it is unlikely that you will be able to make an application straight away. There are usually changes you will have to make to the system so that it meets our requirements. The pack is designed to lead you step by step through our requirements and includes information and checklists to help you plan and complete your application.

We only endorse quality systems which are offered by organisations which are part of [our partnership strategy](#).

This means that your organisation will appear on our partnership website pages and will have to sign a record of the agreed partnership arrangements, including the terms of endorsement.

E. The endorsement badges

What do the endorsement badges look like?

Endorsements between 2009 and 2012

There were two variants of the badge. They specify both the name and the version of the standards endorsed.



Endorsements from 2013 onwards

There are two variants of the badge, reflecting two levels of endorsement.



What do the endorsement badges mean?

We give our endorsement badge to a quality assessment system which meets our terms of endorsement.

It means that:

- the system meets a common standard we set for all endorsed systems
- the system uses quality standards that test a charity widely across a significant number of important indicators of good management and effective service delivery
- the assessment process is undertaken independently of the charity being assessed by assessors who have been trained for their role using guidance and a moderation process that checks for consistency

and

- the assessment process is robust - a charity will find the assessment challenging and will fail if it doesn't meet the standards (including the mandatory tests we require)

We give our endorsement badge to the quality assessment system, not to the organisation which offers the quality assurance system, nor to any charity which is assessed by the system.

We allow a charity which has been assessed as meeting the standards to use our endorsement logo on material promoting the quality assessment system.