

How the CAS Quality Standard helps organisations navigate change and successfully grow by Jacqui Wilkinson

It is a day off for Bev Jay-Fenn; a busy CEO and passionate founder of INVOLVE ACTIVE, a successful Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisation based in Lowestoft. Bev is sitting in her lounge having made time to speak with us online about the value of the Community Action Suffolk Quality Standard. After our conversation for Bev it is getting the Christmas decorations up before launching into the next big thing on the list. It's a varied day. So, what is it about the CAS Quality Standard that has been so important to Bev that it is worth making time in her busy diary to share her story? No matter if you are a CEO of an established VCFSE organisation or your organisation is little more than an idea in your head that you haven't been ready to share Bev's story has something for you I'm sure.

For Bev the impact the of the CAS Quality Standard is clear. ***'It helped make an idea a reality. The conversations that I had with the Quality Standards Support Worker as part of the Quality Standards process was what put me on the road to how I could develop the idea I had in my head. Thirteen years on I've now got thirteen staff, two sites and lots of happy service users. I started with me and volunteer in a church hall'***.

That idea became [INVOLVE ACTIVE](#). They are a VCFSE organisation that is committed to listening to and building on the needs and aspirations of children, young people and adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It is



committed to enabling people to break down barriers, to achieve their aspirations and to have opportunities to lead better lives. The range of services and support they offer is wide. They have S.E.N.D. and Additional Needs day care services, the Involve Centre in Lowestoft is a purpose built centre within the local South Lowestoft community offering fully accessible premises, a sensory garden and large hall for

hire among many other facilities. They also offer training and holiday clubs for ages 8+, up to 25 with S.E.N.D.

Like so many who have undertaken the Quality Standard Bev and the team discovered that it is the process that is important and adds so much value. It's not only about achieving the Quality Standard Award, although not only have they achieved it for the initial three years they have consistently met the Standard and held it for over 12 years. That is quite the achievement. Bev explained about the process, **'It helps you clarify the kind of organisation you want it to be, setting it up legally. For anyone starting out the Quality Standards would be a 'must' because it is the backbone of an organisation.**

It gives us confidence. It consolidates our learning, knowledge, what we've delivered, to know we are doing it right. When you are setting up a new charitable organisation you want to know how to do it legitimately. I think the Quality Standards are brilliant'.

The Quality Standard clearly helps when organisations are setting up so we asked Bev what value they add once an organisation has been up and running for a while. Did the benefits change, is it still worth doing?

'Yes. The first time I did it I was, 'I haven't got that'. Now it is more we have that, how can we improve it? It's always about learning but it has become much more a reflective and review process. A lot still comes out of going through the process. It makes us question our delivery. It questions our support we can give families and service users. It questions the quality of the team that is working with us. It's not a tick box exercise it is more reflective. It's an insurance of the quality of the services we provide to families and it makes us accountable.

It gives you the confidence to develop and make decisions because you know what you have in your policies and procedures etc is what you are meant to be doing.

It's a benchmark but also gives me the enthusiasm and drive to make us better'.

INVOLVE ACTIVE has clearly had the confidence and drive to review and develop their services. It has now expanded to include the [Goldcrest Project](#). Set across five acres of land in the glorious countryside of Rushmere, a mere fifteen minutes from the wide golden sands of Lowestoft beach, the opportunities and benefits are plentiful.

Goldcrest provides unique employment and enterprise opportunities for the INVOLVE ACTIVE service users who run the site. They bring new initiatives to life and greet everyone with the trademark INVOLVE smile and welcome, along with a welcome pack of goodies for those who holiday at the site. Some of the ideas that have bloomed there include; a garden nursery, a wildflower family campsite, log cabin classroom, family allotments, a woodland walk and wildlife area.

Bev and the team at Involve Active have successfully retained the Quality Standard by meeting the Standard every three years. That is quite some commitment to what can be a time intensive process. But, the benefits that come from investing that time are clear for Bev, the team, the service users and all who benefit from their services, seen in their expanding and values based services.

On the subject of time, which is in precious short supply for many CEO's and Trustee Boards whose diaries are packed, the thought of finding more time to do the Quality Standards can feel like a step too far. One thing that counterintuitively perhaps and you may not have considered is that the Quality Standard actually gives you time. Bev told us, ***'It also gives us the time to reflect on what we are doing, what we've achieved, where we want to go and how to get there. We can reflect on the quality of our policies and procedures and how can we continually improve.'***

As a CEO and management team you can be so busy you miss how much you have actually achieved and to have our achievement recognised in important and gives us so much confidence.

It gives you a lever to make things better, to improve on what we've got'.

What INVOLVE ACTIVE have is pretty special and they are continually improving and developing. We can't wait to see what the future brings.



If you want to know more about their work or how you can get involved and support them visit their website <https://www.involve-active.co.uk/>.

If you are looking to set up a new organisation then the Quality Standard could help you become a successful, well established and sustainable organisation built on firm foundations or if you are an established one that wants to develop or strengthen then to find out more about how the CAS Quality

Standard can support your organisation visit our website or contact Jacqui Wilkinson at CAS for a conversation Jacqui.wilkinson@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk or call 01473 345312

<https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/organisation-support/quality-framework/cas-quality-standard/>