



Recognising quality
in independent advocacy

an  NDTI Programme

Frequently Asked Questions



If you're looking for further information or have a question about the Quality Performance Mark (QPM) you can look for the answer in the following FAQs

Scroll through our comprehensive list of frequently asked questions, or use the quick links below to navigate directly to:

- **Check if you are eligible to apply for the QPM**
- **Find out more about the timescales for completing the QPM assessment process**
- **Read more about the Pre-Assessment Questionnaire**
- **Review questions about the Working Agreement**
- **Completing the Assessment Workbook and preparing for Desktop Submission**
- **Preparing for Site Visit**
- **Find out more about holding the Award and what accredited organisations receive**
- **Check if an organisation holds the Award**

Not found a response to your question? Contact our QPM Support Team on 01225 789135 or email support@qualityadvocacy.org.uk for information, support and further guidance.

Got a suggestion? Contact us and share your suggestions for new FAQs.

Q How long does it take to complete the QPM

Our response: This really depends on how quickly you complete and return all documents to us. Please see the [QPM Assessment Timeline](#) for further guidance.

Once your Working Agreement is returned, we will issue an invoice for the first payment and send you your Assessment Workbook. We recommend this is completed in 3-4 months from receipt. We will not accept desktop submissions after 6 months. Your Assessment Workbook will detail the **date of issue** and the **final deadline** for submission. Please note we do not ordinarily offer extensions.

Q We are working to complete the QPM in a really tight timescale, can you help us complete the QPM process quicker than set out?

Our response: We will try to work with your organisation to meet a deadline wherever possible and have supported organisations through QPM from beginning to end in a matter of weeks. However, we cannot guarantee that we'll be able to work faster than the service standards we outline in the [QPM Assessment Timeline](#).

Q How do you cost an organisation's QPM assessment?

Our response: From April 2018 the QPM has moved to a banded costing and assessment model. Our aim is to provide clear guidance on the cost of assessment and ensure that our pricing policy is fair, proportionate and consistently applied for small, medium and large advocacy providers.

The QPM assessment entails a desktop review of the Assessment Workbook and selected Policies and Procedures, together with a review of case files and reports. The number of case files and reports that a provider needs to prepare and submit is depended on the 'band' the organisation falls in. If successful at desktop review, a site visit or series of site visits are undertaken, following which a final report is prepared.

Band 1: For organisations with **up to 15 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) advocates**, the assessment fee is **£1,962.50 plus VAT**. The assessment entails the standard desktop review of an Assessment Workbook, Policies and Procedures, 5 case files and 5 reports of each type written (IMCA and/or Care Act). Organisations of this size will have a one-day site visit.

Band 2: For organisations with **16-30 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) advocates**, the assessment fee is **£2,975.00 plus additional expenses and VAT**. The assessment entails the standard desktop review of an Assessment Workbook, Policies and Procedures, 10 case files and 10 reports of each type written (IMCA and/or Care Act). Organisations of this size will have a two-day site visit.

Band 3: For organisations with **31-45 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) advocates**, the assessment fee is **£4,325.00 plus additional expenses and VAT**. The assessment entails the standard desktop review of an Assessment Workbook, Policies and Procedures, 15 case files and 15 reports of each type written (IMCA and/or Care Act). Organisations of this size will have a three-day site visit.

Band 4: Organisations with **more than 45 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) advocates** will continue to have bespoke assessments designed and costed, but with the aspiration of interviewing 1/3 of advocates under each 'area' or 'regional' manager.

We will confirm the cost of your organisation's QPM assessment following review of your Pre-Assessment Questionnaire. We will confirm the cost and invoicing arrangements in your organisation's Working Agreement.

If you would like to discuss QPM costs with a member of the team, please contact us.

Q What do you mean by independent?

Our response: Some advocacy providers just provide independent advocacy as their sole activity. Other advocacy organisations may be part of a local MIND, AGE UK or other provider. The definition of independence for QPM means that the organisation has a constitution and a local management board and structure that is independent of the funding bodies from which it receives its contracts or grants. Where an organisation provides services in addition to advocacy it will need to demonstrate that the advocacy service is free of conflict of interest and can maintain independence and confidentiality within the organisation.

Q I'm a sole trader or self-employed advocate. Can I get the QPM?

Our response: At the present time it can be difficult for self-employed advocates to demonstrate that they meet QPM standards. However, it's not impossible. Please review the [Assessment Workbook](#) to self-assess against the standards and contact us to discuss.

Q We're setting up a new advocacy organisation. When can we begin the QPM process?

Our response: To gain the QPM Award you need to be operating to QPM standards. For newly established organisations, you need to be confident that you have appropriate policies and procedures in place as well as advocacy delivery being in line with standards. It is not possible to gain the QPM prior to the organisation being operational. You can however use the [Assessment Workbook](#) to help design a QPM compliant service.

Q Our business model is commercially sensitive, how will you protect our organisational confidentiality?

Our response: In order to undertake an assessment your organisation will be required to share the information requested. On completion of your QPM assessment, your Assessor will draft an **Assessment Report**. You and your organisation decide who you share this with. The QPM team will not disclose sensitive information about your organisation.

Your assessor will also be happy to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Q We are merging with another organisation can we apply?

Our response: Yes, but we'd say give yourselves time to settle down post-merger. You will need to be operating to **one set of policies and procedures** and ensure all advocacy staff are practicing to these.

Q When should I complete our organisations Pre-Assessment Questionnaire?

Our response: We encourage organisations to complete and submit your Pre-Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ) once you feel ready to focus on completing your QPM submission. Before completing the PAQ, we encourage advocacy providers to:

- review the [Assessment Workbook](#)
- be confident that their advocacy services are delivered in line with the definition of advocacy and the [Advocacy Charter](#) as a whole
- undertake development activity needed to demonstrate compliance to QPM standards
- Be confident they can complete their desktop submission in 3-4 months from receipt. We will not accept desktop submissions after 6 months.

Organisations have 3-4 months to complete the Assessment Workbook once your organisation accepts our terms and conditions as detailed within the [Working Agreement](#) and we have issued your personalised Assessment Workbook. We are not always able to offer an extension, and will only do so on the grounds detailed within the extensions section of the Working Agreement.

Q Why do you need all the information in the PAQ?

Our response: We need this information to understand the nature of your organisation, the types of advocacy you provide and the size and scope of your delivery. This enables us to check if your organisation is eligible to undertake a QPM assessment as well as to plan and cost your QPM assessment appropriately.

Q Where can I find the Advocacy Charter?

Our response: You can view, download or print the Advocacy Charter [here](#).

Q Where can I find a version of the Assessment Workbook to review?

Our response: You can find a pdf version of the reference only edition of the Assessment Workbook to review [here](#). Please do not complete this version. Your organisation will be sent a workbook which has been tailored for your use.

Q What happens once we have completed our Pre-Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ)?

Our response: We will acknowledge receipt of your PAQ. Once we have determined that your organisation is eligible to undertake a QPM assessment, we send you a Working Agreement to sign and return to us. Once we have received this we will invoice you for half of the cost of your QPM assessment and send you your copy of the QPM workbook to complete. The completed workbook and associated documents need to be returned within 3-4 months from receipt. We will not accept desktop submissions after 6 months. Please also see the [QPM Assessment Timeline](#).

Q What is a Working Agreement?

Our response: A: This is our contract or agreement with you. It sets out the costs and timescale for your QPM assessment as well as terms and conditions for applying organisations and other bits of 'small print'.

Q You've issued our Working Agreement, but our circumstances have changed – what do we do?

Our response: Get in touch with us as soon as you can! If your organisation has changed in scope or size, we may need to issue an updated Working Agreement to ensure your QPM assessment is planned and costed appropriately. You can call us on **01225 789135** or email support@qualityadvocacy.org.uk.

Q How do we provide evidence in the Assessment Workbook?

Our response: The [Assessment Workbook](#) contains guidance for completion. Under each heading there are two sets of QPM indicators:

- indicators you respond to by confirming you have met the indicator **with a tick box**
- indicators where we need a **written explanation** of how your organisation operates in relation to that indicator. These are the QPM indicators that need a longer answer and a description of your practice in relation to that indicator

Refer to pages 6-7 of the reference only edition of the Assessment Workbook for further information.

Q Why do we have to have accessible publicity material?

Our response: You need to provide evidence that your service is inclusive and responds to individual need and the diverse communities that access your service.

This might mean access to information in different languages, easy read or Braille. It might also include spoken word or video resources.

Q What kind of processes do we need related to unmet demand?

Our response: This applies if demand for your service is greater than your capacity to deliver. We would need to see evidence of a prioritisation process so you can respond to people quickly if this is required. This may include a reciprocal agreement with another advocacy organisation to support this additional work when you have reached capacity. We need to see evidence that unmet demand is recorded and reported back to funders to highlight and address the issue.

Q My organisation's policies and procedures aren't advocacy specific, is that ok?

Our response: The answer is, it depends. If the organisation's policies and procedures meet the requirement of the advocacy service and of the QPM, then this is fine. If not, you may need to develop and implement some advocacy specific policies and procedures.

Q What format should case files be in?

Our response: Our preference is that you email us a **PDF** of all **anonymised/fully redacted** case file information. Your Assessor will need to see copies of the full case file, including:

1. referral forms,
2. advocacy agreements or action plans,
3. consent or authorisation forms,
4. contact or case notes
5. and all associated correspondence.

Where this really is not possible we will accept printed case files in hard copy. These will be destroyed following your QPM assessment.

Q Our case files are stored in an online database, can our assessor access the database on the site visit?

Our response: Unfortunately, no.

Your Assessor will need to read case files as a part of your desktop assessment. We may agree for your Assessor to access your database where this is cloud based and you are able to:

- 1) set up a unique log in with time limited and restricted file access
- 2) limit access to the files that are to be reviewed, and
- 3) anonymise the file content, including on all associated correspondence

Q Can we send case studies in with our desktop submission?

Our response: Unfortunately, no.

Your Assessor will need to see copies of the full case file, including:

1. referral forms,
 2. advocacy agreements or action plans,
 3. consent or authorisation forms,
 4. Contact or case notes
- and all associated correspondence.

Q But it's going to take us a long time to prepare and anonymise files!

Our response: We appreciate that pulling together anonymised case files for your QPM Assessor to review can be time consuming. However, this review is an integral and important part of the QPM assessment. Please ensure you give yourselves enough time to do this before your QPM submission deadline.

Q We think there may be a conflict of interest with the Assessor that we have been assigned – what can we do?

Our response: Get in touch with the QPM Team to discuss and we will try and allocate an alternative assessor if we deem this to be appropriate.

Q Are QPM Assessors trained?

Our response: QPM assessors are carefully selected and trained. All have extensive experience in the Health and Social Care Sector and understand about the unique and important role that advocates and advocacy providers undertake. In addition, we ensure that conflicts of interest are minimised, QPM assessors will not be directly involved in any current advocacy delivery.

Q We don't think we can complete our desktop submission within the deadline, what shall we do?

Our response: If you have concerns about whether you can complete your desktop submission within the time frame allotted to your organisation, please do get in touch with us and let us know. We are not usually able to offer extensions to deadlines. We encourage organisation's not to embark on the QPM process until they are sure they can complete the desktop submission within the **Timeline** provided.

Q How do we submit our desktop submission for review?

Our response: Please email your completed workbook, policies and procedures, case files and reports to: support@qualityadvocacy.org.uk. Before submitted your return, you should run through the Pre-submission checklist, referencing and numbering requirements as detailed in the Assessment Workbook.

Q What happens once we send our desktop submission in?

Our response: The QPM team will check your submission is complete and that there is adequate information in the workbook. If further information is required we will contact you and explain what is missing. If your submission is complete, your QPM assessment will be allocated to an Assessor and the desktop submission will be sent to this person for review.

The Assessor will complete the desktop assessment within **4 weeks** of receiving your desktop documents. They or another member of the QPM Team will contact you to feedback the outcome of the assessment and explain any development actions that may be required. If the desktop assessment shows that your organisation has demonstrated that it is working to QPM standards, your Assessor will begin planning your site visit or visits with you.

Q We weren't successful at Desktop Assessment stage, what happens now?

Our response: Your Assessor will provide you with a **desktop assessment feedback report** detailing what further evidence or developmental action(s) your organisation needs to provide and/or undertake in order to meet QPM standards. They will explain what the different options are for your organisation. You can resubmit updated desktop documents for review (for an additional fee) and we encourage organisations to give themselves time to complete and embed any required changes prior to resubmitting.

Q What happens at the Site Visit?

Our response: Your Assessor will contact you in advance of the visit and agree an agenda with you.

They will discuss who should be interviewed but ordinarily will need to meet with:

- The Advocacy Manager/s
- The organisation's Director or CEO (where this is a different person)
- A member of the board
- Advocates
- People who have used the advocacy service
- An external stakeholder, e.g. Commissioner, Referrer, Ward Manager.

With bigger organisations we may also want to see the team that takes and processes referrals, training leads, business development leads, operational leads etc.

Your Assessor can provide information for people who have used the service for you to share. You need to arrange a confidential space for the Assessor to meet with people.

Q What documentation do we need to prepare for the Site Visit?

Our response: Your Assessor will let you know if there is any additional documentation they need to see when they plan the agenda for the site visit.

Q What else do we need to do to prepare for the Site Visit?

Our response: There's nothing in particular that you need to do, except ensure that everyone is available and that there's a space for the Assessor to meet with people confidentially. The interviews are as informal as they can be and are just about how you deliver your advocacy services.

Q How do I know how many days on site (Site Visits) our organisation will have to have?

Our response: Your Working Agreement will specify this.

Q How long does the QPM award last for?

Our response: The QPM award is for a period of **three years** from the month we complete our final Assessment Report. Your Award logo includes your organisation name and the dates that your award is valid from and to. We will contact you six months prior to your QPM award expiring to discuss renewal, but organisations can commence the next cycle of the QPM assessment by completing and submitting a new [Pre-Assessment Questionnaire](#). Organisations must allow sufficient time to apply again and complete the assessment process **before** the existing QPM Award expires.

Q What is the process for renewal?

Our response: You need to complete a new [Pre-Assessment Questionnaire](#) and undertake a full QPM assessment.

Q What do you supply as evidence of us having achieved the Award?

Our response: We will supply you with a:

- a final Assessment Report, that confirms the assessment outcome and dates of Award for your organisation
- an Award Certificate (or similar)
- a personalised QPM Award Logo for use on website, leaflets etc
- a letter confirming your QPM status.
- We will also add your organisation name, url and logo to the list of QPM holding organisations on our website.

Q How do I appeal if I am not happy with the QPM Assessor's decision?

Our response: The [Working Agreement](#) provides you with up to date information about how to appeal or raise concerns about your QPM assessment.

Q We've checked the website and we can't see our organisation listed. What do we do?

Our response: Please let us know as soon as possible and we'll ensure your organisation's details are added. You will need to send us your artwork (logo) in the format we request.

Please note, only organisations who **hold a current QPM Award** will be listed. We update the QPM website once a month, so please double check if you are a newly accredited organisation.

Q We've checked the website and an organisation that doesn't hold QPM anymore is listed. What can be done?

Our response: Please let us know and we'll address this as soon as possible. We will request that the organisation removes the Award Logo without delay.

Where we have grounds to suspect that an organisation may be deliberately misleading people, or where an organisation does not respond to our request to remove reference to holding QPM from their website and printed resources, we may consider referring the matter to the Local Authority should they be commissioning the services of the provider.

Q An organisation is displaying a QPM logo, but they're not on the QPM website.

Our response: Please let us know so we can check whether the organisation should be listed and establish why it isn't. If an organisation is displaying a QPM logo without having a current QPM award, we will contact them and ask them to cease doing so.

Q Can you tell me where an organisation is in their QPM journey?

Our response: No. Not unless you are the lead contact for that organisation. We can only tell you if an organisation does or doesn't currently hold the QPM.

Q I'm looking for a QPM holding advocacy provider, how do I find one?

Our response: We list all organisations in England, Northern Ireland and Wales who currently hold the QPM Award on our website. You can search for an organisation on our interactive map, or you can check the downloadable list of accredited organisations.

Q We want to celebrate gaining the QPM. Do you have a hashtag we can use?

Our response: Congratulations! We're all for celebrating good advocacy provision! Please try and use the **#Advocacy** and **#QPMAward** where you can. Please do include the **@NDTiCentral** Twitter handle on your social media posts, as this will enable us to share your stories and pictures with our extensive group of followers.