

Quality in Befriending

information for projects



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introduction

what is Quality in Befriending?

Quality in Befriending [QiB] is a free quality award for befriending projects.

There are 2 levels at which QiB can be awarded:

- QiB Award (safe & competent practice)
- QiB Excellence (good practice)

development of Quality in Befriending

Quality in Befriending [QiB] has been developed by Befriending Network Scotland [BNS] and has been designed to complement other BNS resources, including the **Befriending Code of Practice** and the Scottish Qualifications Authority credit-rated **Vital Skills in Befriending** training course. It was launched in August 2010 and replaces the Approved Provider Standard in Scotland.

Quality in Befriending was written by Martha Lester-Cribb (BNS Quality Officer) in collaboration with other BNS staff and in consultation with a representative sample of member organisations and other experts in the field of befriending.

the benefits for projects

- befriending staff have the opportunity to review all aspects of the services they manage
- projects receive a 'health check' and advice on how they can continue to develop the quality of their practice
- projects gain recognition for good practice, which can help to increase the confidence of potential referrers, clients and volunteers, and assist with funding bids
- successful applicants receive a certificate and use of the Quality in Befriending logo

cost

All aspects of QiB (including attending information & support events, registration, and assessment) are **free** for members of BNS.

QiB is open to non BNS members for the cost of BNS membership and applicants automatically become members. Applicants must remain members of BNS until the assessment process has been completed.

scope

QiB assesses the core work of befriending projects and is *not* an assessment of the wider organisation.

practice areas

The practice areas covered by QiB are:

1. client referrals, assessments and waiting lists
2. volunteer recruitment, assessment and selection
3. volunteer training
4. matching
5. reviews and ongoing support for clients and befrienders
6. endings
7. risk management
8. project resources
9. monitoring & evaluation, and implementing change

eligibility

BNS aims to help **all** befriending projects develop their practice. However, in order to ensure that projects don't spend a lot of time preparing a QiB application only to find that their project's structure doesn't meet the fundamental requirements of the award, there are nine eligibility criteria in place. Any projects which don't meet these criteria but which would still like to work on developing the quality of their service should contact BNS to discuss what other options are available.

eligibility criteria

1. This standard is for projects which:

- › work with “**vulnerable**” and/or “**isolated**” people
- › provide **companionship** - the aim is to do things **with** people, not **for** them
- › have a strong emphasis on the idea that the primary intervention is the **relationship** - the relationship may be used to achieve goals, but achieving the goals is not the primary aim (contrast with mentoring where the focus is the issue at hand and the imparting of knowledge)

To summarise: in befriending, the **issue** makes you vulnerable and/or isolated - the **relationship** is how you tackle the resulting vulnerability and isolation [this corresponds to positions 1-4 on the Befriending/Mentoring Spectrum, see Appendix 2: p18].

2. Both clients and befrienders must be taking part in the relationship on a **voluntary** (ie not paid) basis.
3. The volunteers must work in a **purely befriending role** (ie **not** as advocates / carers / advisers / personal assistants / shoppers / counsellors / DIY helpers etc).
4. More than 50% of clients within the project must be matched with volunteers on a **one to one** basis (ie projects which also incorporate **some** group befriending or other group work are eligible to apply, however the award only assesses the quality of the one to one work) - this could be either face to face or telephone befriending.
5. The project should have completed at least **one full cycle of work** before registering (ie client referrals and assessments, volunteer recruitment, training and selection, matching, providing support to befrienders, reviewing matches).
6. The project must be **currently active** (ie have undertaken all the tasks listed in 5 above within the last 12 months).

7. **Funding should be in place** for the project to continue for at least the next 12 months, or funding applications to enable this should have been submitted.
8. All required **policies, procedures and forms** should be in place and being used.
9. The project should meet the BNS Code of Practice Safe & Competent Practice **staff:befriender ratio** recommendation that no more than 30 matches are supported by 1 full-time member of staff *[see p19 of the Code of Practice for part-time equivalents]*.

how to apply

registering for QiB

The project registers by downloading the **Aiming for Quality in Befriending Registration Form** from the BNS website, completing and signing it, and sending it back to BNS. This form includes:

- › the project's contact details
- › the proposed submission deadline
- › an eligibility checklist
- › a baseline monitoring form (to help BNS to report to its funders)

See Appendix 3 [p20] for information on how organisations with more than one befriending service can request permission to submit a combined application.

eligibility check

BNS checks the Registration Form to ensure the project is eligible for QiB. Once this has been done, the Project is listed on the BNS website as "Aiming for QiB".

application materials

BNS sends a QiB application folder to the project. It contains a hard copy of:

- › the application guidance notes
- › the application form
- › the quality statements for the 9 practice areas
- › the requirements, indicators and required and/or possible evidence
- › evidence sheets
- › an evidence index form

Electronic versions of these documents are also available on the BNS website.

preparing the application

The project completes the short **Application Form** and gathers copies of **recent evidence** to demonstrate it meets the Requirement Indicators. Where appropriate this evidence should be "live" (ie copies of forms which have been filled in, anonymised where necessary). An **Evidence Sheet** must be completed for each Requirement and the **Evidence Index Form** must be completed to provide a complete list of all the documents provided. The evidence should be filed in a folder/s supplied by the project (typically at least one LeverArch folder).

submitting the application

The project returns the QiB Application Folder (with all completed forms) together with their folder of evidence to BNS for assessment within 9 months of registering.

overview of the stages of QiB

registration



- completes QiB Registration Form which includes:
 - > project contact details
 - > an eligibility checklist
 - > their chosen deadline
 - > Baseline Form (for BNS' own internal monitoring)
- sends completed Registration Form to BNS

registration acknowledgement



- confirms that the project is eligible
- sends out:
 - > a list of the standards to be met
 - > the QiB Application Guidelines
 - > folder
 - > the electronic Application Form

application



- completes:
 - > Application Form
 - > folder of evidence
- submits form and folder to BNS by chosen deadline

assessment



- assesses the application
- sends 1 in 4 applications to be externally verified
- writes detailed assessment report for all applicants
- sends certificate and logo to successful applicants
- sends letter with guidelines to projects which have been assessed as either not fully proved or not yet achieved
- sends Follow-Up Form for applicants to complete and return to BNS (allowing comparison with Baseline Form for BNS' internal monitoring)

awarded project monitoring



- completes minimal Annual Monitoring Form, confirming the project details, and sends it to BNS

support available

information days

BNS holds at least **one QiB Information Day** each year. These days include presentations on how to apply for QiB and the benefits of achieving the award. Projects have the opportunity to ask any questions, check if they are eligible to apply, and register for QiB.

website

The **quality pages** of the BNS website (www.befriending.co.uk) contain information about QiB.

support events

BNS holds a **QiB Surgery** in the run-up to each of the 4 annual QiB application deadlines. Projects can book a half-hour slot (either face-to-face or on the phone) to ask questions about their application.

individual advice

Registered projects can contact the BNS Quality Officer by telephone or e-mail for support with their application.

assessment

initial assessment

QiB applications are assessed by the BNS Quality Officer. The assessment is a “desktop” exercise, ie there are no site visits involved.

The completed Application Form will be used to give the assessor an overview of the structure and size of the project.

In order to achieve QiB, the project must demonstrate through the evidence they include in their folder that they meet all the indicators in the 9 Practice Areas.

Each **Requirement** will be judged as falling into one of the following 4 categories:

- a) **achieved at Good Practice [GP]** level
- b) **achieved at Safe & Competent Practice [S&CP]** level
- c) **not proved** - ie there is not enough evidence provided so it’s not possible for the assessor to judge
- d) **not achieved** - ie the project’s practice doesn’t meet the minimum required standard as set out for the Safe & Competent Practice level

Projects must achieve either a) or b) throughout all 9 Practice Areas in order to be awarded QiB.

assessment outcomes

There are four possible outcomes for each assessment:

1. **achieved “Quality in Befriending Excellence”** (awarded for a duration of 3 years) - ie they have achieved Good Practice throughout all 9 Practice Areas
2. **achieved “Quality in Befriending Award”** (awarded for a duration of 3 years) - ie all 9 Practice Areas have been achieved, but not all as Good Practice
3. **not fully proved** - awarded subject to provision of supplementary evidence and/or answers to Application Form questions, within a specific time-scale
4. **not yet achieved** - awarded subject to evidence of changes in practice as recommended, within a specific time-scale

verification

One in four assessments (randomly selected), plus any borderline applications, will be checked by one of two external verifiers. Any discrepancy in the assessment decisions will be resolved through discussions between the assessor and external verifiers.

feedback to applicants

achieved “Quality in Befriending Excellence”

Projects which have successfully achieved GP throughout their application will receive:

- › a **Quality in Befriending Excellence certificate** with the date that their award expires
- › an electronic version of the **Quality in Befriending Excellence logo** to use on their project materials
- › an **award letter** explaining they can state they have been assessed as demonstrating “good practice” throughout their befriending service
- › a comprehensive **assessment report** with examples of particularly good practice highlighted and suggestions of areas for possible development
- › an updated entry on the standards page of the BNS website and the QiB logo displayed with the project’s name in the online Befriending Directory.

achieved “Quality in Befriending Award”

Projects which have achieved all 9 Practice Areas but not all at GP level will receive:

- › a **Quality in Befriending Award certificate** with the date that their award expires
- › an electronic version of the **Quality in Befriending Award logo** to use on their project materials
- › an **award letter** explaining they can:
 - › state they have been assessed as demonstrating “safe and competent practice” throughout their befriending service (they are free to disclose any Practice Areas in which they were assessed as having “good practice”)
 - › choose to submit further evidence within 6 months of the date of the award letter in an attempt to upgrade to “Quality in Befriending Excellence”
- › a comprehensive **assessment report** with examples of particularly good practice highlighted and suggestions of areas for possible development
- › an updated entry on the standards page of the BNS website and the QiB logo displayed with the project’s name in the online Befriending Directory.

not fully proved

Projects which have not submitted enough evidence to prove they meet all the Indicators (but which have not had any indicators assessed as “not achieved”) will receive:

- > a **letter** which describes how they can achieve the award by submitting adequate supplementary evidence within 2 months of the date of the letter
- > a **comprehensive assessment report** which highlights examples of particularly good practice and suggests areas for possible development

not yet achieved

Projects whose practice has been assessed as not meeting all the indicators at the minimum Safe & Competent Practice level will receive:

- > a **letter** which either:
 - » describes how they can achieve the award by submitting evidence of appropriate changes (and any required supplementary evidence to resolve any Indicators which were not proved) within 4 months of the date of the letter, or
 - » recommends resubmission (in no less than 6 months and after re-registering)
- > a **comprehensive assessment report** which highlights examples of particularly good practice and suggests areas for possible development

appeals process

Projects should write to the Quality Officer at BNS within 3 months of the date of their assessment letter, outlining their reason for the appeal.

If the application has not already been verified, it will be sent to one of the external verifiers whose decision will be final.

If the application has already been verified, the initial assessor will discuss the application with one of the external verifiers. If they agree to uphold the appeal, the project will be notified of this decision. If they still agree that the application is not successful or if there is a difference of opinion, the application will be sent to a second external verifier whose decision will be final.

feedback from applicants

Projects which have either achieved QiB or been recommended to resubmit will be sent a Follow-up Form. When compared with the results of the Baseline Form (completed as part of Registration), this allows BNS to measure the degree of any changes in:

- > staff's knowledge about their project
- > the project's strengths
- > the availability of evidence for the 9 Practice Areas.

It also provides feedback on the value of the award for projects and the quality of the support offered by BNS. The results are used to review the award and also to feedback to BNS' funders.

what BNS keeps

The project's QiB folder (containing the completed application form, evidence sheets and evidence index) will be kept by BNS. Once the assessment process is finished and the project has been informed of the final outcome, all the supplied evidence will be returned to the project using recorded delivery.

monitoring & reaccreditation

annual monitoring

A project which holds a QiB award is required to complete a short Annual Monitoring Form. This form asks the project to update the information they supplied on their Application Form, including:

- > contact details
- > funding
- > staffing levels
- > the number of matches being supported
- > targets

If the responses indicate that the project may no longer be meeting the level of QiB which they have been awarded, or if BNS becomes concerned about this from any other source of information, BNS will contact the project and ask them to clarify the situation. If necessary, the project will be asked to submit up-to-date evidence for specific Practice Areas which will then be assessed against the indicators. In consultation with the external verifier(s) BNS has the right to withdraw QiB from individual projects or downgrade the level of award they hold.

significant project changes

Current holders of QiB are responsible for informing BNS if there are any significant changes in their practice or resources which could mean they are no longer meeting the Quality in Befriending requirements (eg the client:staff ratio increases dramatically). Similarly they must inform BNS if the nature of the service provided changes significantly (eg if the client group changes or the type of befriending offered is altered).

If an organisation launches an additional befriending project, they must contact the Quality Officer at BNS to find out whether this new project can be incorporated within their existing QiB award.

reaccreditation

Projects which want to continue to hold the QiB award after 3 years must submit a full Application Form and up-to-date evidence (“live” where appropriate) *before* their existing award expires. This will then be assessed in the same way as a new application.

Projects which have submitted their reaccreditation application before their existing award expires can continue to use the QiB logo until their new application has been assessed.

If a project’s existing award expires before they submit their new application, they must stop using the QiB logo until their new application has been assessed as successful.

appendix 1: timings summary

registration

Projects can register as “Aiming for Quality in Befriending” at any time. Once registered, they have **9 months** to submit their application. The date taken is the date the registration is acknowledged and the application pack is sent out.

extensions

In exceptional circumstances, projects may be awarded a **3 month** extension to the 9 month “Aiming for Quality in Befriending” period. To apply for an extension, projects should download and complete a “QiB Extension Request Form” before the final date their application is due.

registration expiry

If projects do not submit an application within **12 months** of registering, their registration will expire and they will have to wait another **6 months** before re-registering. This preserves the integrity of the “Aiming for Quality in Befriending” status.

assessment periods

There are 4 QiB assessment periods each year:

- > March
- > May
- > August
- > November

In order to make sure that their application is assessed during a specific period, projects should ensure their application arrives at BNS by the last working day of the previous month. At the time of registration, projects are asked to say which of these dates (within the next 9 months) they are aiming for. This helps the assessors to plan their workload.

awards

QiB awards are valid for **3 years** from the date of the first assessment outcome letter.

submitting further evidence

Projects which are assessed as not having fully proved that they meet the criteria for Safe & Competent Practice have **2 months** from the date of the assessment letter in which to submit further evidence. If they go on to achieve the award, it will be valid from the date of their original assessment letter.

submitting evidence of change

Projects which are assessed as not having yet met all the indicators at the minimum Safe & Competent Practice level have **4 months** from the date of the assessment letter in which to submit evidence of change. If they go on to achieve the award, it will be valid from the date of their original assessment letter.

upgrading to “Quality in Befriending Excellence”

Projects which are assessed as having achieved the “Quality in Befriending Award” may make one submission of further evidence during a period of **6 months** from the date of their award letter in an effort to be upgraded to “Quality in Befriending Excellence”. If they are successful, their award will still be valid for 3 years from the date of their original award letter.

resubmission

Projects which have not yet achieved “Quality in Befriending” and which have received a resubmission recommendation, must wait **6 months** from the date of the assessor’s letter before they resubmit an application.

appeals

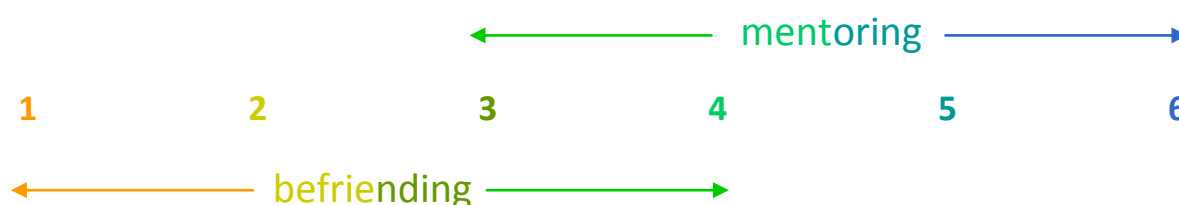
Projects have **3 months** from the date of their assessment letter to lodge an appeal against the assessment decision. [*see p13*]

annual monitoring forms

In years 1 and 2, an Annual Monitoring Form will be sent out to projects which have been awarded QiB approximately a month before the anniversary of their award. The completed form must be returned to BNS **by the anniversary**. (Projects which want to continue to hold QiB must reapply every 3 years.)

appendix 2: befriending / mentoring spectrum

There can be a broad overlap between what is called ‘befriending’ and what is called ‘mentoring’ and most projects fall somewhere along this continuum. However, typically, mentoring projects encourage a goal-focused approach where matched volunteer and client pairs actively work towards agreed targets and the relationship between them is mainly a by-product of this process. Befriending projects, on the other hand, tend to place the emphasis more firmly on the relationship itself. The overlap between befriending and mentoring occurs when mentoring projects ask their matched pairs to build their relationship first before moving on to work on their targets.



There are six broad types of project which can be identified by using the befriending / mentoring spectrum:

1. *Befriending* – the role of the volunteer is to provide informal, social support. The primary objective of the relationship is to form a trusting relationship over time, usually in order to reduce isolation and to provide a relationship where none currently exists. Other outcomes may occur, eg a growth in confidence, but these are never set as objectives for the relationship.
2. *Befriending* – the role of the volunteer is to provide informal, social support. There may be additional stated objectives at the start of the relationship, eg increasing involvement in community activities. The success of the relationship is not dependent on these objectives being achieved, but they are seen as a potential benefit of befriending over time.
3. *Befriending/Mentoring* – the role of the volunteer is to provide informal, social support and through this supportive relationship to go on to achieve stated objectives, eg increasing clients’ confidence to enable them to do activities independently in the future. The objectives form a basis of discussion between project, volunteer and client at an early stage and are reviewed over time.
4. *Mentoring/Befriending* – the role of the volunteer is to develop objectives with the client over time. Initially the role is to develop a relationship through social activities in order to establish a level of trust on which objective-setting can be based. Due to the client’s changing circumstances, objectives may take time to set and may be low key.

5. *Mentoring* – the role of the volunteer is to work with the client to meet objectives which are agreed at the start of the relationship. These are achieved through the development of a trusting relationship which involves social elements but which retains a focus on the objectives agreed at the start.
6. *Mentoring* – the role of the volunteer is to work with a client solely on agreed objectives which are clearly stated at the start. Each meeting focuses primarily on achieving the objectives; and the social relationship, if achieved, is incidental.

[NB: In order to be eligible for QiB, projects must fit within positions 1 to 4 on the Befriending/Mentoring Spectrum]

appendix 3: organisations with multiple projects

Some organisations run more than one befriending project – this may either mean that there are several slightly different befriending projects managed from the same base (eg working with different client groups / age ranges) or that the same befriending project model is replicated in more than one location.

Each individual project can submit its own independent application for Quality in Befriending. Alternatively, the organisation can request permission to submit one combined application on behalf of two or more of the projects. In order to do this, each project wanting to be included in the application must complete a separate copy of the standard “Aiming for Quality in Befriending Project Registration Form”. The organisation should submit these to BNS together with a completed “Multiple Project Registration Form”.

In consultation with the external verifiers, the BNS Quality Officer will respond individually to each request for a combined application. For example, if there are significant differences between the projects involved, each project will be required to submit its own independent application. If the differences are minimal the organisation will only be required to submit one copy of all standardised policies and procedures but with individual application forms and copies of live evidence provided by each of the projects involved.