



Background to the charter

We want everyone who works on behalf of QSA to be proud of what they do in the name of QSA and to take QSA's reputation seriously. This charter has been designed by staff for staff, with the intention of it being shared with future colleagues as a key document as part of recruitment and induction.

It is a statement about the kind of colleagues we aim to be to each other, the kind of professionals we want to be seen as to work with and how we wish to be experienced by those who come to QSA to access our services.

It replaces our code of conduct and does so explicitly. We felt that the list of "do's" and "don'ts" were incomplete and were set out without any context. Moreover, we felt that the implication of the previous code of conduct was that it was easy to be clear and concrete about what is right and what is wrong. In our experience, as a learning organisation, situations can be more nuanced and require a degree of professional judgement and tact. Therefore, it felt more honest, more helpful, and also more true to our values to present this charter differently.

Purpose of the charter

The purpose of the charter is to safeguard the reputation of QSA, and all involved with it, whether staff, volunteers, trustees, or people who use our services. This safeguard isn't just safeguarding against actual harm or problems but also the allegation of harm. If we all behave consistently and have a strong ethos of working within this charter, then we minimise the risk of doing something wrong or being accused of it.

We have framed the elements of the charter in positive language, where possible, because we believe that QSA is an enabling and problem-solving organisation. The basis of this charter is trust, but we do understand that bad behaviour can exist in organisations, leading to complaints or requiring disciplinary action. QSA takes these breaches of behaviour seriously and these will be addressed if and when they arise.

This charter underpins the rest of QSA's policies, many of which require us to behave in certain ways to comply with the law and with best practice, such as health & safety, GDPR, safeguarding and alongside our disciplinary procedures.



The charter

1. **Treat people well.**

Our reputation hangs on how well we treat people, and our working relationships depend upon us treating each other well.

What does this look like?

We expect each other to be understanding, dependable, willing to admit mistakes and learn. We will treat colleagues with respect and be friendly and courteous. We all bring our own experiences to QSA, have faced different challenges and have differing life experiences. We'll aim to actively respect different perspectives and opinion, irrespective of role or position, while understanding that these may not always be voiced. We endeavour to respect these differences and to go further to redress inequalities where we can.

2. **Separate out the personal from the professional.**

The relationships we build at work, with people who access our services, are precisely that, they are work relationships. Our aim is to build warm relationships, but we need to have boundaries in place to ensure that the lines don't get blurred and to avoid misunderstandings or worse.

What does this look like?

We will keep a professional distance, being discreet about our own personal life, using official QSA communication tools such as phone and email and social media. We won't accept gifts or hospitality beyond token items, and we won't initiate physical contact that isn't appropriate for the workplace. We will all work hard to contribute to a robust safeguarding culture.

3. **Be clear what we can do and what we can't.**

We will often want to "go the extra mile" and sometimes we can, but this isn't always possible or appropriate.

What does this look like?

We need to be realistic about what we can do and what we can't do, and what the timescales are. We mustn't go beyond our areas of expertise, nor give advice we're not professionally qualified to give. Where necessary, we could and should signpost on to others who can provide better support.

4. **Look after safety and wellbeing.**

We need to do what we can to keep everyone, ourselves included, safe and well while we work.

What does this look like?

We must be alert to risks in our work, not with the aim of removing all risks, but with the view that we take risks with our eyes open and that we minimise unnecessary risks wherever we can. This is particularly true in terms of personal safety, going into someone's home, being out late, travelling to new areas. It is also the case for keeping information safe; being very mindful of confidentiality, data, and privacy concerns. We recognise that our work is only a part of our whole selves and that we can experience challenge and stress personally and/or professionally, so we also need to be alert to how our work might impact our wellbeing. We want to feel supported to take active steps to look after ourselves and speak to our colleagues and our managers if we need more help.

5. **Expect colleagues to hold themselves to high standards too.**

All of us are ambassadors of QSA at work and we can and should expect our colleagues to play their part.

What does this look like?

We must be willing to offer our colleagues constructive feedback if we feel they aren't behaving in a way that enhances QSA's reputation, or if they are risking themselves or others. We must be willing to have that difficult conversation with them, or, if need be, with our manager. And if we receive such feedback, we need to be willing to reflect and learn.

6. **We learn from successes and from mistakes.**

Things won't always go right, and sometimes the best learning comes from these times. But when things go well, we should celebrate and affirm our successes. QSA's work evolves, and we want to adopt a mindset of learning and unlearning across our work.

What does this look like?

We will put our hands up when things are not going well and be generous in sharing our knowledge and expertise with our colleagues. We will be curious and learn from our colleagues, from the people who we work with, from our partner organisations.