



## Assurance Services Quality Assurance

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The  
Consultation  
Institute

### Quality Assurance

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**A robust audit of your end-to end consultation process, that provides you with a public endorsement and certificate.**



## About Quality Assurance

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**Quality Assurance (QA) is a structured assurance programme from the Consultation Institute (tCI).**

When a project is potentially controversial and stakeholders may be considering a challenge, having us QA your consultation reduces the risk by ensuring you meet best practice standards at all stages.

Challengers typically seek to stop what you propose because they do not like it or it negatively affects them. However, these are not grounds for a legal challenge, so they must find flaws and inadequacies in the process, and it is these flaws that our process will identify and eliminate.

Through a series of seven interventions, the QA process has been designed to ensure that your consultation activities meet the required standard, reducing the risk of costly errors, reputational damage and possible legal challenge.

It is delivered using a team of two experienced Institute associates, an assessor, and a verifier. They work closely with your team to provide support in preparing for each intervention, ensuring that standards are understood and, where required providing practical advice on how to prepare.

The verifier will ensure that you are well prepared to meet the requirements of each stage of the QA process. The assessor will act as a critical friend throughout, working on the Institute's detailed methodology.

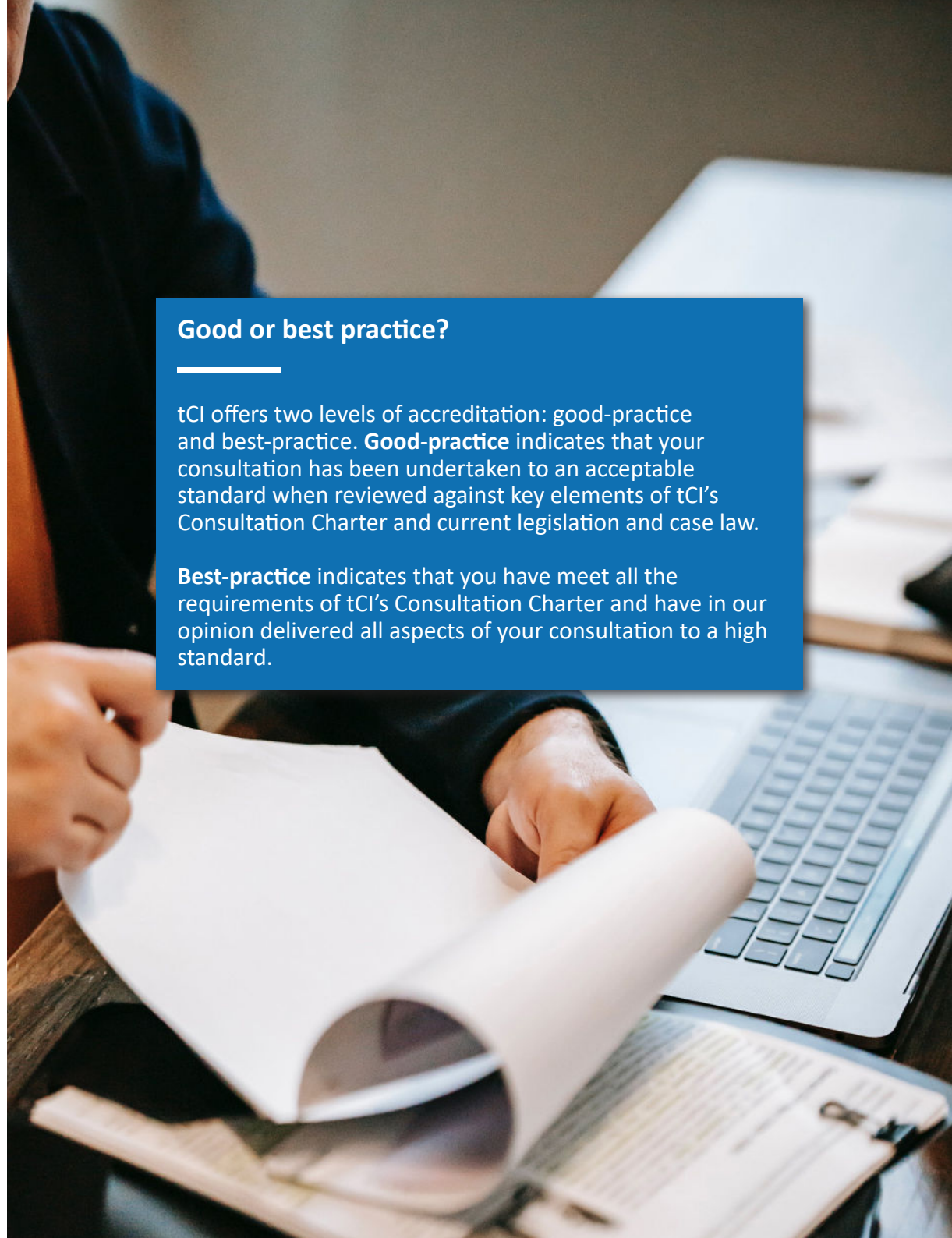
Quality Assurance is usually initiated before a public consultation programme commences. However, QA can be tailored to look at specific aspects of the consultation process, for instance to review pre-consultation and options development, or equalities analysis, both of which have come under increasing scrutiny in recent legal challenges.

### Good or best practice?

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tCI offers two levels of accreditation: good-practice and best-practice. **Good-practice** indicates that your consultation has been undertaken to an acceptable standard when reviewed against key elements of tCI's Consultation Charter and current legislation and case law.

**Best-practice** indicates that you have met all the requirements of tCI's Consultation Charter and have in our opinion delivered all aspects of your consultation to a high standard.





## Working together

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Quality Assurance is delivered using a team of two experienced tCI Associates, an Assessor and a Verifier. They work closely with your team to provide support in preparing for each intervention, ensuring that standards are understood and, where required, providing practical advice on how to prepare.

### The roles of the Assessor and Verifier

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- tCI appoints an experienced, trained Associate to work with you as an Assessor.
- Working closely with your consultation team, the Assessor will ensure that you are well prepared to meet the requirements of each stage of the QA process.
- The Assessor will act as a critical friend throughout, working to tCI's detailed methodology.
- A Verifier is also appointed to provide formal 'sign off' for each stage of the QA process.
- The Verifier works with the Assessor to ensure that standards are observed, and confirms when your consultation has satisfied the requirements for each stage of the process.

### The process

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tCI provides every client undertaking Quality Assurance with a copy of the Client Handbook, which contains information on the scope and requirements of each intervention. This guide helps you to collate any documentary evidence required and provides you with a clearer understanding of what the Verifier will be seeking from you to sign-off each stage of the process.

Following each intervention you will receive a letter of confirmation from the Verifier indicating the standard which has been achieved for that element of the QA process.

On completion of the QA process, tCI will provide a letter of confirmation stating whether your consultation as a whole has met the requirements to be awarded good-practice or best-practice status. You will also receive a public endorsement from tCI for use with any communications activities.

## Intervention Zero\*

Review of historic (pre-consultation) activities in support of the case for change, shaping of proposals or options development and appraisal. This is to ensure that there are no gaps, omissions or assumptions which might create concerns for the forthcoming public consultation.

## Scope and Governance

A consultation should be clear about the purpose of consulting and what matters are open to stakeholder influence. To achieve 'sign-off', a consultation needs an authoritative scoping document describing key aspects of the exercise, its constraints and coverage.

## The Project Plan

Consultations need professional project management. Activities, roles and responsibilities and resources all need to be identified and documented in a project plan, alongside a robust stakeholder analysis to identify which audiences need to be engaged. tCI's planning checklist will support you in preparing for this stage of the process.

## Consultation Document Review

It helps to have an independent review of your consultation documentation. tCI does not endorse the substantive content of consultation materials, however, we do ensure that the information is clearly presented and sufficient to enable intelligent consideration of your proposals.

## Mid-point Review

Review of historic (pre-consultation) activities in support of the case for change, shaping of proposals or options development and appraisal. This is to ensure that there are no gaps, omissions or assumptions which might create concerns for the forthcoming public consultation.

## Closing Review

The Closing Review considers whether the consultation activities have been delivered in line with the project plan, and whether sufficient engagement has taken place with the relevant stakeholders. We also revisit the data analysis plan to confirm this is suitable for analysis and reporting activities.

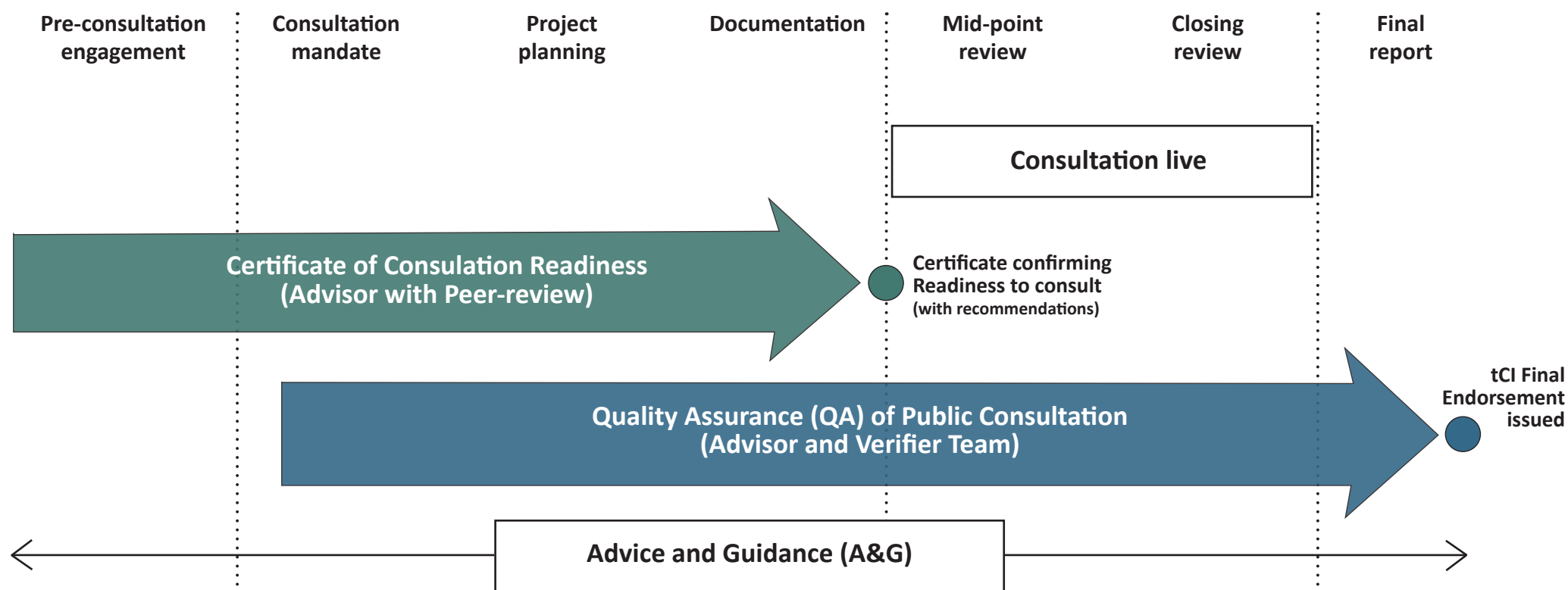
## Final Review

The final intervention focuses on the reporting of findings from the consultation. The aim is to ensure that the report of findings is a balanced and true representation of the views which have been received and is suitable to inform and influence the decision-makers and meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

\*Intervention Zero is not required if the client has completed the Institute's Certificate of Consultation Readiness



## Where does QA and other Assurance services sit in the consultation process?





“We recently held the mid-term review for our consultation and it was a great opportunity for us to take stock of how things were going. The Institute has provided us with such sound advice. Their recommendations have been tremendously helpful.”

**Sally Baxter | Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board**



## Contact us

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