



Staffordshire
Social Care
Workforce

CMDT
Care Market Development Team

Quality Improvement Guide

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Foreword

This guide has been developed to introduce the subject and further research and learning is recommended to provide a complete understanding. Requirements are often unique to individual care services, and you should consider how best to implement practices.

Introduction

Quality improvement is the process of making changes to the way you work, to improve the quality of care you provide. Quality improvement is not about finding faults or blaming people, but about learning from experience and making continuous improvements.

Quality improvement is important because it can help you to:

- Ensure that the care you provide is safe, effective, person-centred, and responsive to the needs and preferences of the people you support.
- Meet the standards and regulations that apply to your service, such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards, the Health and Social Care Act 2008, and the Care Act 2014.
- Enhance the reputation and credibility of your service and your profession.
- Increase the satisfaction and well-being of the people you support and the staff you work with.
- Reduce the risks of complaints, incidents, and poor outcomes.
- Use your resources more efficiently and effectively.
- Innovate and adapt to changing circumstances and expectations.

Quality improvement is not a one-off activity, but an ongoing cycle of reflection, reviewing and action planning.

Principles

Reflection, review, and action planning are core principles of quality improvement. They are interrelated and interdependent, and they form a cycle that can be repeated as often as needed.

Reflection

Reflection is the process of thinking critically and systematically about your practice and your organisation, and evaluating what you do and why you do it.

Reflection can help you to:

- Identify your strengths and areas for improvement.
- Recognise the impact of your actions and decisions on the people you support and the staff you work with.
- Understand the context and the factors that influence your practice and your organisation.
- Learn from your successes and failures, and from the feedback and experiences of others.
- Develop new insights and perspectives and challenge your assumptions and biases.

To reflect effectively, you need to:

- Set aside time and space for reflection, either individually or with others.
- Ask yourself open-ended and probing questions, such as: What did I do? How did I do it? Why did I do it? What went well? What did not go well? What did I learn? What can I do differently?
- Be honest, objective, and constructive, and avoid being defensive, judgmental, or complacent.
- Document and record your reflection and share it with others if appropriate.

Review

Review is the process of measuring and monitoring the quality of care you provide and comparing it with the expected standards and outcomes.

Reviewing can help you to:

- Assess whether you are meeting the needs and preferences of the people you support and the staff you work with.
- Check whether you are complying with the standards and regulations that apply to your service, such as the CQC standards, the Health and Social Care Act 2008, and the Care Act 2014.
- Determine whether you are achieving the goals and objectives of your service and your organisation.
- Identify the gaps and the areas for improvement in your practice and your organisation.

- Celebrate and recognise the achievements and the good practice in your practice and your organisation.

To review effectively, you need to:

- Use a range of methods and sources to collect and analyse information, such as observations, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, audits, and surveys.
- Involve the people you support and the staff you work with in the review process and seek their views and feedback.
- Use relevant and realistic criteria and indicators to measure and monitor the quality of care, such as outcomes, satisfaction, safety, effectiveness, person-centredness, or responsiveness.
- Use benchmarks and standards to compare and evaluate the quality of care, such as your last CQC inspection report.
- Document and report your findings and share them with others if appropriate.

Action planning

Action planning is the process of planning and implementing changes to improve the quality of care you provide.

Action planning can help you to:

- Address the gaps and the areas for improvement identified by your reflection and your review.
- Make the most of your strengths and the good practice identified by your reflection and your review.
- Improve the outcomes and the satisfaction of the people you support and the staff you work with.
- Enhance the reputation and the credibility of your service and your profession.
- Innovate and adapt to changing circumstances and expectations.

To action plan effectively, you need to:

- Set SMART goals and objectives for the changes you want to make, that is, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound.
- Identify the actions and the steps you need to take to achieve your goals and objectives and assign responsibilities and deadlines for each action and step.
- Identify the resources and the support you need to implement your actions and steps, such as staff, time, money, equipment, training, or guidance.
- Communicate your action plan to the people you support and the staff you work with and involve them in the implementation process.
- Monitor and evaluate the progress and the impact of your action plan and adjust if needed.
- Document and record your action plan and share it with others if appropriate.

Collaboration and embracing change

Quality improvement is not something you can do alone, but something you need to do with others. A collaborative approach and a willingness to embrace change and being self-critical are key attitudes and skills for quality improvement. Here is how to use them in your practice and your organisation.

A collaborative approach

A collaborative approach is when you work with others to achieve a common goal or a shared vision. A collaborative approach can help you to:

- Share your knowledge, skills, and experience with others, and learn from them.
- Build trust, respect, and rapport with others, and create a positive and supportive work culture.
- Encourage participation, engagement, and empowerment of the people you support and the staff you work with.
- Generate new ideas, perspectives, and solutions, and foster creativity and innovation.
- Improve the coordination, communication, and cooperation
- Reduce conflicts, misunderstandings, and errors.

To use a collaborative approach, you need to:

- Identify and involve the relevant stakeholders in the quality improvement.
- Establish clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for each stakeholder, and respect their differences.
- Communicate openly, honestly, and regularly with each stakeholder, and listen actively and attentively to their views and feedback.
- Seek consensus and compromise when making decisions and avoid imposing your views or opinions on others.
- Recognise and appreciate the contributions and the achievements of each stakeholder and provide constructive and positive feedback.
- Resolve any conflicts or issues that arise in a respectful and professional manner and seek support or mediation if needed.

Embrace change and being self-critical

A willingness to embrace change and being self-critical is when you are open and flexible to change, and when you can question and challenge yourself and your practice.

A willingness to embrace change and being self-critical can help you to:

- Adapt to the changing needs and preferences of the people you support and the staff you work with.
- Respond to the changing standards and regulations that apply to your service.
- Improve your knowledge, skills, and competence, and enhance your professional development.

- Identify and address your weaknesses and limitations and seek feedback and support.
- Avoid complacency, stagnation, and resistance, and foster a culture of learning and improvement.
- Improve the outcomes and the satisfaction of the people you support and the staff you work with.

To use a willingness to embrace change and being self-critical, you need to:

- Be aware of your own values, beliefs, and assumptions, and how they influence your practice and your organisation.
- Be curious and inquisitive, and seek new information, knowledge, and evidence.
- Be flexible and adaptable and accept uncertainty and ambiguity.
- Be proactive and positive and take initiative and responsibility.
- Be humble and honest and admit your mistakes and failures.
- Be reflective and evaluative and learn from your experience and feedback.

Feedback

Feedback from staff and people in receipt of care is essential for quality improvement, as it can help you to:

- Understand the needs, preferences, and expectations of the people you support and the staff you work with.
- Assess the quality and the impact of the care you provide and identify the strengths and the areas for improvement.
- Plan and implement changes to improve the quality of care and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Build trust, respect, and rapport with the people you support and the staff you work with and enhance their satisfaction and well-being.
- Encourage participation, engagement, and empowerment of the people you support and the staff you work with and foster a culture of learning and improvement.

To include feedback from staff and people in receipt of care in quality improvement, you need to:

- Ask for feedback from staff and people in receipt of care regularly and systematically, using a range of methods and sources, such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observations, complaints, compliments, or suggestions.
- Ensure that the feedback is relevant, reliable, and representative, and that it covers the different aspects and dimensions of quality, such as outcomes, satisfaction, safety, effectiveness, person-centredness, or responsiveness.
- Ensure that the feedback is collected and analysed in a confidential, and respectful manner, and that it complies with the data protection and the confidentiality policies and procedures.
- Communicate the feedback to the people you support and the staff you work with and explain how it will be used and what actions will be taken.
- Involve the people you support and the staff you work with in the quality improvement process and seek their views and opinions on the changes and the improvements.
- Recognise and appreciate the feedback from staff and people in receipt of care and provide them with updates and feedback on the progress and the impact of the quality improvement process.

New ways of working and a strength-based approach

Exploring new ways of working and building on existing strengths with a strength-based approach are important strategies for quality improvement, as they can help you to:

- Improve the outcomes and the satisfaction of the people you support and the staff you work with, by focusing on their strengths, abilities, and potential, rather than their weaknesses, problems, and deficits.
- Enhance the quality and the consistency of care, by using evidence-based and best practice methods and techniques, rather than relying on habits, routines, or traditions.
- Increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of your service and your organisation, by using your resources more wisely and creatively, rather than wasting or misusing them.
- Innovate and adapt to changing circumstances and expectations, by trying new ideas, approaches, or solutions, rather than sticking to old ones.
- Develop your knowledge, skills, and competence, and enhance your professional development, by learning new things, acquiring new qualifications, or joining new networks, rather than staying in your comfort zone.

To explore new ways of working and build on existing strengths with a strength-based approach in quality improvement, you need to:

- Identify and acknowledge the strengths and the achievements of the people you support and the staff you work with and use them as a basis for improvement.
- Identify and address the weaknesses and the challenges of the people you support and the staff you work with and use them as opportunities for improvement.
- Use evidence and data to inform your practice and your organisation, and keep up to date with the latest research, guidelines, and standards.
- Seek and share good practice examples and case studies from your own or other services or organisations and learn from them.
- Experiment and test new ideas, approaches, or solutions, and evaluate their feasibility, suitability, and effectiveness.
- Seek and use feedback and support from others, such as your managers, your colleagues, your partners, or your mentors.

Using the right language

Using examples and plain English are essential skills for quality improvement, as they can help you to:

- Communicate clearly and effectively with the people you support and the staff you work with, and avoid confusion, misunderstanding, or error.
- Engage and persuade the people you support and the staff you work with and motivate them to participate and cooperate in the quality improvement process.
- Explain and illustrate the concepts and the principles of quality improvement, and make them more relevant, meaningful, and memorable.
- Demonstrate and evidence the quality and the impact of the care you provide and show the benefits and the outcomes of the quality improvement process.
- Appeal to a wide and diverse audience and respect their diversity and differences.

To use examples and plain English in quality improvement, you need to:

- Use simple and familiar words and phrases, and avoid jargon, acronyms, or technical terms, unless you explain them.
- Use short and clear sentences and paragraphs and avoid long and complex ones.
- Use active and positive language and avoid passive and negative language.
- Use punctuation, bullet points, and headings to structure and organise your text, and make it easier to read and follow.
- Use charts, graphs, tables, or images to present and visualise your data and information and make it more attractive and understandable.

Following a CQC inspection

The CQC will inspect registered locations and produce a report, following their inspection.

In the event of receiving a requires improvement or inadequate from the CQC, it could be disheartening, especially if it wasn't expected.

It is easy to focus on the negative rating, but it is also an opportunity to engage a quality improvement approach and build the service back stronger.

There are several areas to focus on:

- Review the report for themes. Read the CQC report carefully and identify the main areas of concern and the evidence that supports them. Look for common patterns or themes across the different domains and key lines of enquiry. For example, if the report mentions issues with communication, staff training, or record keeping in several places, these might be areas that need more attention and improvement.
- Review the CQC regulations to understand what is required. The CQC regulations set out the fundamental standards of quality and safety that all adult social care providers must meet. Reviewing the CQC regulations can help you understand what the CQC inspectors look for when they visit your service and how they judge whether you are meeting the standards or not. By comparing your current practice with the CQC regulations, you can identify the gaps and areas for improvement and prioritise your actions accordingly. You can also use the CQC regulations as a framework to guide your quality improvement plan and to measure your progress and achievements.
- Speak with staff and people receiving care to understand their views. Involve your staff and the people you support in the quality improvement process and listen to their views and suggestions. Explain the CQC report and its implications to them and ask them for feedback on what they think needs to change and how. Encourage them to share their experiences and ideas and to work together as a team to improve the quality of care. Recognise and acknowledge the contributions and achievements of your staff and the people you support and thank them for their cooperation and commitment.
- Engage with the local authority quality assurance function to understand what support and guidance is available. Contact your local authority's quality assurance team and inform them of your CQC rating and your action plan. Ask them for advice and support on how to improve your quality of care and meet the CQC standards. The local authority may have resources, tools, training, or funding that can help you achieve your goals and monitor your progress. They

may also have links with other organisations or networks that can offer you peer support or mentoring.

- Look at peer networks such as the registered managers network to share ideas and thoughts. Join or participate in peer networks or forums where you can connect with other adult social care providers or registered managers who have faced similar challenges or achieved good CQC ratings. Share your experiences and challenges and learn from their best practices and solutions. Seek feedback and advice from your peers and offer your support and guidance to others. Peer networks can help you gain new perspectives, insights, and confidence and can also provide you with emotional and moral support.
- Build an action plan with clear timelines and areas of responsibility. Based on the CQC report and the feedback from your staff, the people you support, the inspector, and the local authority, develop a SMART action plan that outlines the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound actions that you will take to improve your quality of care and meet the CQC standards. Assign clear roles and responsibilities to your staff and ensure that they have the resources and training they need to carry out their tasks. Monitor and review your action plan regularly and update it as needed.
- Review existing audit procedures for those areas identified as a concern by the CQC and don't forget to celebrate those areas that were identified as positive. Evaluate your current audit and quality assurance processes and systems and check if they are effective and robust enough to identify and address any issues or risks in your service. Make sure that you have clear policies and procedures, record keeping, and reporting mechanisms that enable you to monitor and improve your performance and demonstrate your compliance with the CQC standards. Also, remember to celebrate and showcase the areas of your service that were recognised as positive or outstanding by the CQC and to build on your strengths and achievements. Celebrating your successes can help you motivate and inspire your staff and the people you support and can also help you attract and retain more customers and referrals.

Summary

Quality improvement is reflecting and understanding what can be improved and the journey of implementing those changes effectively together.

It focuses on communicating effectively with different audiences, understand their needs and expectations, and involve them in the quality improvement process.

By focusing on achieving quality improvement as a team, and with everyone involved, you will be able to achieve better, more sustainable results.

For further information,
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