Driving up Quality in Adult Social Care

What is Quality?

Foreword

Caring for our future set out a vision for reform based upon two important principles: that we should build the system around promoting people's independence and wellbeing and that people should have control of their own care and support and be able to make the choices that are right for them. The White Paper also recognised that in reality, far too many people face a daily struggle with simple tasks, fear loneliness and isolation and face the prospect of dependence on services that do not treat them as individuals or with dignity and respect. The concept of quality care and support – what it is, how we can sustain and improve it and whose job it is to do so – is central to redressing the balance.

The shocking examples of sub-standard care and abuse at Mid Staffordshire Hospital and Winterbourne View show what can happen when the system fails to provide people with a quality service. We cannot tolerate these failures in our health and care system and in our society. Each case also illustrates the critical importance of ensuring the voices of people, including carers and families, are at the centre of the debate on what quality means and how we can sustain and improve it. Empowering people to make choices and take control will play a critical part, but we cannot assume that this alone will be enough. At its heart, good quality care is about relationships – relationships between staff and managers, across and between organisations, across government and most importantly between individuals and the people who provide support day to day. This is everybody's business and there can be no excuses for failure.

A coherent approach to ensuring people get the quality care and support they deserve must start from a consistent definition and understanding of what quality means. This is why in *Caring for our future* we made the commitment to set out clearly what good-quality care looks like and what people should expect when using care and support services. We also said we would secure high profile leadership for quality in the sector. I am therefore delighted to endorse this important series of documents from Think Local Act Personal, which together provide a compelling narrative for what quality care and support means, the principles that should underpin **how we assure** quality and the responsibilities of different people and organisations that **have** a role in ensuring and improving quality.

We said in the White Paper that the changes needed to reform care and support can only come about through a genuinely collaborative endeavour that crosses the traditional boundaries between the third sector, private organisations, local authorities and individuals. The cross-sector engagement that has underpinned the production of this series of documents strongly reflects this ambition. We all want people to be able to say, 'I am happy with the quality of my care and support.' I hope these documents will help us all understand more fully what this means so we can make this the reality everyone should be able to expect.

Norman Lamb MP, Minister of State for Care and Support

Introduction

This is one in a series of three documents about quality in social care, produced by the Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) partnership and its National Market Development Forum (NMDF) in consultation with the Department of Health (DH). It is designed to help build a common understanding about quality for anyone directly involved in providing, arranging, regulating or setting standards for care and support. Together, these documents provide a framework to promote and support quality assurance and improvement in adult social care.

In the *Caring for our future* White Paper (July 2012),[1] the government stated that everyone should understand what high quality in care and support looks like – in whatever setting it is provided and whoever it may be provided by, and that clear roles and responsibilities for quality should be set out. The need for high profile leadership for quality in the sector was acknowledged and TLAP was asked to further develop this work.

This paper gives a high-level overview, describing **what quality** is and what needs to be in place to assure and improve quality in social care. Two further documents – TLAP's *Statement of Quality Assurance Principles* (November 2012) and *Who is Responsible for Driving Up Quality?* – complete the picture of **who** is involved in quality and **how** they can help make life better for people.

'The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it but that it is too low and we reach it.'

Bill Davidson, co-chair of TLAP, variously attributed to Michelangelo

1 DH (Department of Health) (2012) *Caring for our future: Reforming care and support*. London: DH.

What do we mean by quality in care and support?

In care and support, quality starts from what matters most to enable people to live their lives in the way they want. By definition, there can be no 'one size fits all' in personalised care and support. Getting the right balance for people can only be achieved through a person-centred approach which understands someone's personal history, current circumstances, future aspirations and what is important to them. This may change over time – so it is important not to make assumptions.

For most services, the consumer will decide what a quality service means to them and this is how it should be. For instance, some people may judge the quality of air travel by the amount of seating space and range of entertainment available. Others may think that the most important thing is the customer service they receive. Both will assume that the plane will be airworthy and that the crew will be competent to assure a safe journey. In care and support, people may have a preference for more luxurious physical factors such as surroundings, activities and food than those required by law, however, a care and support service can **only** be considered high quality if:

- it places the person receiving the care at its centre

- it enables personal outcomes to be achieved

- the relationship between the person who is using the service and the people who deliver it is based on dignity and respect.

Quality care and support services **must** also pay close attention to things that need to be in place to ensure they operate safely.

'People who use services are best placed to say what good really looks like!'

TLAP workshop participant

Common themes that apply in any setting

Evidence from research, from people using services, organisations and practitioners[2] shows that, for social care, there are some essential factors that a service must have to provide high quality care and support. We brought together the factors that people say are important to the quality of their lives – especially messages from *Making it Real*[3] statements co-produced with people using services and carers, which express what people want to see, experience and expect to find if personalisation is really working. The following themes emerged.

High quality care and support exists where people who use social care:

- are enabled to live independent lives as defined by them, with informed choice and control through access to appropriate services and as much involvement in decisions about care and support as they want to have

- have opportunities to participate in community life, engage in activities that match their interests, skills and abilities, and maintain good relationships

- feel safe, secure and empowered because their human rights are safeguarded while they are supported to manage informed risks

- have a positive experience of care provided through relationships based on mutual respect and consideration, where care is designed around their needs and is consistent and coordinated.

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2 Drawn together from PSSRU http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot/; *My Home Life* http://myhomelife.org.uk/; *Making it Real* http://www. thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/mir/aboutMIR/; National Voices http://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/principles-integrated-care; SCIE's definition of excellence http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/misc/definitionsofexcellence/index.asp; and the Care Quality Commission's *Essential Standards of Quality and Safety* http://www.cqc.org.uk/organisations-we-regulate/registering-first-time/ essential-standards.

3 For more information on *Making it Real*, visit www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/MIR

Achieving and improving quality

Positive care **experience** meeting personal aspirations

Effective service delivery

Safe and meets essential **standards**

The diagram above seeks to describe a way of thinking about quality in care and support that places the person using services at the centre. Quality in this context is about assuring effective service delivery, a positive care experience, and standards and processes that keep people safe while recognising choice and control. Achieving and improving quality means making sure that these components are all being addressed and encouraging continuous improvement. It includes taking steps to restore good standards where things go wrong, and highlights:

- the individual **experience** of people receiving care and support and how far it meets their aspirations

- services that keep people **safe** (without taking away personal control)

- processes that ensure services are **effective** – this includes achieving personalised outcomes and value for money.

'Quality is about doing it right, especially when no one is looking.'

TLAP workshop participant

Key things that need to be in place for this to work well

Feedback from TLAP partners suggests that for quality in social care services to be achieved, sustained and improved, other factors need to be in place. In a 'people business' like social care, the quality of the relationship between staff and the person using care and receiving support is paramount and needs to be based on respect and empathy.

The following underpinning characteristics are necessary to achieve high quality care and support.

- **Leadership** should be visible and proactive, connected to service outcomes and able to inspire people to have high aspirations for themselves and others.

- The **voices of people** using the service, their family carers and supporters must be positively welcomed through genuine involvement in shaping and providing **feedback**.

- The **culture** within which care and support is provided should be positive, open and respectful with an **ethos** that is proactive, **person-** and **relationship-centred**. **Dignity**, **empathy** and **compassion** should be evident.

- The **workforce** should comprise considerate, competent, confident and highly motivated people – including managers – whose values, attitudes and behaviours reflect the primary focus of supporting and empowering people to have the best possible quality of life.

- **Accountability** for quality should be clear and transparent to all, whatever forms the service takes and whichever organisation or individual provides the service.

- **Professional standards**, such as for nurses, social workers and occupational therapists, should be maintained with accessible, objective **expert advice** available as needed. People who use services are experts by experience and can provide such advice. Both professional staff and unqualified care workers should follow relevant codes of conduct.

- People who use regulated services should be able to rely on regulators, local commissioners and providers to ensure care meets expected **regulatory standards**.

- **Workforce and service development** should **inspire** and excite those involved and encourage imaginative practices that enable people to achieve good outcomes.

- **Education** and **training** should be seen as integral in an environment where supervision and appraisal help to encourage continuous professional development as well as ensure that objectives are met.

- Organisations should work with people to **design** and where possible manage their own service through **co-production** and build this into the system for assuring the quality of everything they do.

- Services should communicate and collaborate well with one another to make sure that people experience care and support that is **joined up** and **coordinated** around their personal needs and requirements.

- Practice should be **evidence-based** wherever possible – both drawing upon and producing knowledge to contribute to understanding about 'what works' in a way that is not so prescriptive so as to discriminate against small-scale services and which supports innovation.

'National players need to model behaviour expected at a local level – involvement, communication, collaboration, strategic coherence, co-produced solutions.'

TLAP workshop participant

Moving forward

Any drive for improvement should focus on what needs to happen locally to deliver the quality of care and support that citizens are seeking. Providers have the prime responsibility for assuring the quality of their service. However, others such as commissioners and regulators have an important role to play to make sure that the local care and support options available for people are of good quality.

Just as the day-to-day relationships and interactions between individuals are central to high quality care and support, so are the working relationships at local and national level that help to assure quality and support improvement. *Making it Real* aims to bridge the gap between local and national frameworks for quality. It provides a benchmark for what good support looks like if it works well. It does not necessarily cover everything as it depends on the circumstances of an individual and their family and what they want from life. Other models or frameworks might equally apply or work better in certain settings or for particular services. The third document in this series – *Who is Responsible for Driving Up Quality?* – explains more about the roles and responsibilities of the main bodies contributing to quality.