

The NHS Plus Quality Strategy

Overview

The reviews conducted by Dame Carol Black and, more recently, Dr Steve Boorman have delivered occupational health (OH) professionals an unrivalled opportunity to dramatically improve the health and wellbeing of the NHS workforce while delivering a more efficient and cost effective service.

By offering real value to our customers while delivering high quality and consistent services, OH teams can enhance patient care, improve the health of the NHS workforce and deliver efficiencies in an era of increasingly tight budgets. Members of the Network have called for more detailed standards in addition to support in developing a more efficient and effective health at work service for their customers. The NHS Plus Quality Strategy is designed to respond to this demand.

Specifically, the Quality Strategy sets out a vision for delivering a series of standards, designed to ensure each team has the tools they need to deliver the highest quality OH service.

Why is a Quality Strategy necessary?

In 2008, the Health and Work Development Unit (formerly Occupational Health and Clinical Effectiveness Unit) conducted the first national audits of OH care. These audits showed wide variation in clinical practice remains in the management of back pain and depression screening in those absent from work - reinforcing the need to improve service quality and consistency.

A benchmark survey of OH services also identified significant variations across the Network in terms of services offered, waiting times, response times and, perhaps most importantly, the use of clinical audit. Respondents called for consistency of standards and

support in standardising procedures and processes in order to drive greater efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

What has been the effect of the Boorman review?

A systematic review of how the health and wellbeing of the NHS workforce led by Dr Steve Boorman recommended *'locally determined services should be built round a common core of nationally specified services which should include early intervention to tackle common conditions leading to sickness absence and reduced well-being.'*

The Quality Strategy in practice

The Quality Model (below) provides the foundation for service delivery.

Stage 1: explicit standards for quality of care
Stage 2: care pathways designed to provide optimum interventions
Stage 3: training and support to ensure local implementation
Stage 4: a system of accreditation to demonstrate competence
Stage 5: clinical governance to ensure continuing delivery

Designed to build upon the Faculty of Occupational Medicine's (FOM) accreditation standards, Network members will be required to meet some additional healthcare specific standards.

What are the Quality Strategy standards?

Quality Strategy Accreditation Standards	Requirement
1. FOM standards (6 domains)	Meet the FOM standards for OH providers in full
2. Quality Strategy core services	Able to deliver a range of core services
3. Quality Strategy delivery standards	Meet specified waiting and delivery targets
4. Quality Strategy business standards	Demonstrate the use of a costing model and utilise an annual business (strategic) plan
5. Quality Strategy evidence based clinical standards	Demonstrate participation and use of clinical audit, evidence based guidelines and a system of clinical governance

What are the Quality Strategy core services standards?

The new core services standards are designed to detail the exact health at work services that staff and their organisations must have access to. The core services are grouped under a number of key headings:

Prevention: the prevention of ill health caused or exacerbated by work

Timely intervention: easy and early treatment of the main causes of sickness absence in the NHS

Rehabilitation: processes to help staff stay at work or return to work after illness

Health Assessments for Work: supporting organisations manage attendance, retirement and related matters

Promotion of health and well-being: using work as a means of improving health and wellbeing and using the workplace to promote health

Teaching & Training: promoting the health & wellbeing approach amongst all staff and ensuring the availability of OH staff in the future

What are the delivery standards?

The specific Quality Strategy delivery standards are designed to set a minimum standard for staff and managers on accessing the service and response times.

How will the Quality Strategy accreditation standards work?

As part of the Government's response to the Black Review, the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) undertook to establish standards for all providers of occupational health services. These standards were published in January 2010 and set an important benchmark for the profession and are designed to improve the delivery of quality OH services. Please see <http://www.facocmed.ac.uk/standards/index.jsp>

The Quality Strategy builds upon the FOM standards and their accreditation process will accredit our standards.

What is the current timeline?

- Six pilot sites from our Network will test the standards and process during autumn 2010.
- The online assessment service will be launched on 1 December 2010 at the annual FOM Conference.
- OH services will be able to register with the new accrediting body for an information pack from 2011.

- Network members will enter the self-assessment phase from December 2010, and will have developed their own action plans for accreditation by June 2011.
- From 2011 onwards services will be able to undertake full accreditation against the FOM and Quality Strategy standards, with onsite audit conducted by an OH clinician and an expert auditor.
- Network members will be expected to have achieved, or be ready for, full accreditation by March 2012.

Will there be a process of re-accreditation and what will this cost?

Members of the Network will be re-accredited on an ongoing basis in accordance with the process. Initial indication by the FOM of accreditation costs is consistent with other clinical accreditation systems.

How will we support members as they implement the Quality Strategy?

A range of support will be put in place to help Network members implement the Quality Strategy. We have:

- Established a Clinical Governance Steering Group as a sub group of the Interim Network Board to oversee the implementation of this strategy including the development of a model of clinical governance.
- Conducted a series of local briefings across England to discuss the Quality Strategy, the standards model and implementation plan. Feedback from attendees will be shared with the entire Network.
- Appointed a Quality Strategy Facilitator in each SHA area to work closely with and support local OH teams in preparing for accreditation, producing action plans and sharing good practice from across the Network.
- A third Durham Business School programme for the leaders of OH services commenced in September 2010.

Further support will include:

- Local workshops in the winter/spring of 2010/2011 to help services take stock of their readiness for accreditation against the standards and to develop local action plans.
- Developing a costing model and template business plan to be available to members on a subsidised basis.
- A development programme for OH leaders delivered by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement.