



Is bigger better? Lessons for large-scale general practice

4. Improving quality

About this booklet

From 2014-16, the Nuffield Trust undertook research that combined a literature review, national surveys and qualitative and quantitative analysis of case study sites.

All lessons are captured in four booklets. This booklet covers improving quality.

Booklets 1, 2 and 3 cover leadership and governance, sustainability and working with the wider health economy.

Three actions to help improve quality of care

- 1 Set clear quality improvement goals**
 - Identify specific quality improvement objectives (that are relevant to local health needs and/or commissioner priorities) on which to focus quality improvement work
 - Work with commissioners to attach targets to objectives at network levels¹ and encourage contracts to be in place long enough to see a potential return on investment in quality²
 - Choose appropriate process and outcome metrics to track your progress, as this will influence behaviour. Capture baseline data as early as possible and choose appropriate follow-up times for measurement of change

- Make change meaningful – people may have an incentive to do the wrong thing if it will improve the metric score.³

2 Regularly revisit goals and progress

- Use organisation-wide support systems (for example, administrative target reviews, clinical case discussions, IT-enabled quality and performance dashboards) to support quality improvement initiatives¹
- Evidence suggests clinical case discussions within networks and administrative target reviews can improve process and outcome measures⁴
- Take advantage of the opportunities of scale to deliver education and training (for example, using web technologies) and skills development
- Use standardised processes to improve delivery of initiatives to improve quality.

3 Provide central support to member practices to improve quality

- Identify practices performing less well on quality measures and offer them support to improve care
- Clinical leaders who work in member practices act as powerful role models to other staff, so they need to model good practice
- Training and education delivered through web-based technologies can provide an efficient way to develop skills in clinical and non-clinical staff.

References

- 1 Robson J, Hull S, Mathur R and Boomla K (2014) 'Improving cardiovascular disease using managed networks in general practice: an observational study in inner London', *Br J Gen Pract*, 64(622), e268-e274.
- 2 Sheaff R, Child S, Schofield J, Pickard S and Mannion R (2012) *Understanding professional partnerships and non-hierarchical organisations*. National Institute for Health Research Service Delivery and Organisation Programme.
- 3 Institute for Healthcare Improvement (2005) *Going Lean in Health Care*. Cambridge, MA.
- 4 Pettigrew L, Mays N, Kumpunen S and Rosen R (2016) *Large-scale general practice in England: what can we learn from the literature?* Nuffield Trust.

To read the full report, visit:

[www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/research/
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