

# Quality Assurance Reporting Final Internal Audit Report

October 2022

Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee



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Audit and Assurance Services conform with all Public Sector Internal Audit Standards as validated through the external quality assessment undertaken by the Institute of Internal Auditors

### Acknowledgement

NHS Wales Audit and Assurance Services would like to acknowledge the time and co-operation given by management and staff during the course of this review.

### Disclaimer notice - please note

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## Executive Summary

### Purpose

To evaluate and determine the adequacy of the systems and controls in place within WHSSC in relation to quality assurance reporting.

### Overview

We have issued substantial assurance on this area.

There was one matter requiring management attention:

- There was limited evidence to suggest that Health Boards are submitting the WHSSC Quality and Patient Safety Chair’s report to their own quality committee meetings for scrutiny and assurance.

### Report Opinion



Few matters require attention and are compliance or advisory in nature.

**Low impact** on residual risk exposure

### Assurance summary<sup>1</sup>

Objectives	Assurance
1 Roles and responsibilities of the Quality and Commissioning teams	Substantial
2 Processes and mechanisms to allow the Quality and Commissioning teams to co-ordinate the quality monitoring	Substantial
3 Effective quality assurance reporting arrangements in place	Reasonable

<sup>1</sup>The objectives and associated assurance ratings are not necessarily given equal weighting when formulating the overall audit opinion.

### Key Matters Arising

	Objective	Control Design or Operation	Recommendation Priority
1	Monitoring of WHSSC quality matters in Health Board committee meetings	3 Operation	Medium

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our review of quality assurance reporting within the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC) was completed in line with the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan for Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (the 'Health Board').
- 1.2 WHSSC is responsible for the joint planning of specialised services on behalf of the Local Health Boards in Wales. Their strategic aim is to ensure that there is equitable access to safe, effective and sustainable specialised services, as close to patients' home as possible, within available resources. The quality of care and experience that patients and their families receive is central to the commissioning of specialised services. The specialised services commissioned by WHSSC are managed through five programme commissioning teams and include areas such as mental health, cancer & blood and neurosciences.
- 1.3 In 2014 a WHSSC Quality Framework was developed to provide an infrastructure around quality assurance. The framework has since been revised and renamed the Commissioning Assurance Framework (CAF) to encompass components necessary to provide assurance. A quality team was set up in 2019 to strengthen the focus of quality monitoring, improvement and reporting. The quality team have a pivotal role in the co-ordination of quality monitoring, interventions and reporting across the commissioned services. In turn, relevant quality information is required by health boards from WHSSC so they can meet their responsibilities to deliver high quality, safe healthcare services for all their citizens.
- 1.4 The risks considered in this review were:
  - Serious concerns and performance related issues are not identified meaning remedial action cannot be taken.
  - WHSSC is unable to provide assurance to health boards on the quality of care it commissions on their behalf.
- 1.5 We focussed on the role performed by the Quality function, and not the CAF as a whole.

## 2. Detailed Audit Findings

### **Objective 1: The role and responsibilities of the Quality team and the Commissioning service teams in relation to quality monitoring and reporting have been captured.**

- 2.1 The CAF identifies that the Quality team was appointed in 2019 to "strengthen the focus on quality monitoring and improvement". It further details their role in the co-ordination of quality monitoring and interventions within commissioned services.
- 2.2 The Quality team comprises of a small number of staff, with each providing support to a number of commissioning teams. Their role is integral in the Commissioning teams and they provide quality information from internal and external reports and visits to the service providers, on matters such as infection control, serious untoward incidents (SUIs) and patient experience. Our testing has not identified

any concerns with the current set up of the team, though should the remit of their work expand in the future, the current resource and set up of having a shared quality lead overseeing a few commissioning teams may need to be reviewed.

- 2.3 The Quality team do not carry out the investigations into complaints and SUIs, this is undertaken by the service provider. However, the team link in with the provider and ensure that investigations are carried out in a timely manner, that responses address the issues of concern, and that lessons learnt are shared and themes are considered. They will also advise the Health Board who are commissioning the service of any complaints or SUIs.
- 2.4 The Quality team have been involved in re-introducing Service Improvement & Innovation Days (previously called Audit and outcome days). The days are to "support and strengthen the reporting of patient outcomes and experience, sharing of best practice and benchmarking across commissioned services". At the time of our audit, four improvement days had been hosted for Intestinal Failure, Sarcoma, Gender and Traumatic Stress Wales (TSW) Services, and there were key learnings and actions taken from the events.
- 2.5 The Quality team have recently produced a quarterly Quality Newsletter. The newsletter is to highlight some of the work that the team are involved with from a commissioning perspective and includes an update on the Service Innovation & Improvement Days, data about the number of incidents and complaints and short updates in relation to each of the Commissioning Teams.

#### Conclusion:

- 2.6 The roles and responsibilities of the Quality team members within the Commissioning teams is clearly set out. The Quality team have embedded quality monitoring and quality reporting within the commissioning services. The team have progressed since they were established, ensuring that quality and quality monitoring is a key priority in all commissioning teams. We have provided a Substantial assurance rating for this objective.

#### **Objective 2: Processes and mechanisms are in place that allow the Quality and Commissioning teams to co-ordinate the quality monitoring and interventions within commissioning teams to enable reporting.**

- 2.7 There are service specifications and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in place for each of the services commissioned and these are monitored through SLA meetings with the provider. Prior to the meeting, the quality team review any available data on the services of the provider. During the meetings updates are provided on the services being commissioned and issues are discussed including actions to resolve the issue.
- 2.8 The WHSCC Quality team also meet with the health boards to discuss the services that WHSSC have commissioned on their behalf. These meetings allow the health boards to feedback concerns they may have, and for WHSSC to update the health boards about the commissioned services.
- 2.9 Where quality issues are identified with a service provided, an escalation process is in place that allows for enhanced monitoring to ensure issues are resolved as

soon as possible. The Corporate Directors Group Board are responsible for placing services in escalation. The escalation steps are aligned to a tiered approach:

- Level 1 – Enhanced monitoring. This is for any quality or performance concerns that have been identified and will be reviewed by the Commissioning Team.
- Level 2 – Escalated Intervention – For services where Level 1 Enhanced Monitoring identifies the need to further investigation/ intervention.
- Level 3 – Escalated Measures – Evidence that the action plan developed following Level 2 has failed to meet the required outcomes or a serious concern is identified.
- Level 4 – Decommissioning / Outsourcing – Services that have been unable to meet specific targets or demonstrate evidence of improvement a number of actions need to be considered at this stage.

2.10 WHSSC are in the process of enhancing the process by developing an 'Escalation on a page' document. We understand that this will provide greater detail on the escalation status, highlighting a trajectory showing movements within the escalation level, to allow for more granular monitoring.

2.11 We reviewed the quality monitoring arrangements for Adult Gender Services and Cardiac Services, to ensure that there were appropriate processes in place and in line with the CAF. Both services had specifications in place, albeit one was in draft, which detailed the quality indicators and key performance indicators for the provider. There was evidence of meetings with the provider to discuss the services. Both commissioning teams for these services reported into the WHSSC Quality Patient Safety Committee (QPSC) and detailed reviews undertaken by other external functions and services that were in escalation. They also reported actions that had been taken since the previous review and the current position.

#### Conclusion:

2.12 There are appropriate processes and mechanisms in place that allow the Quality and Commissioning teams to review the providers and services in place. Where there have been issues with a service, an escalation process was in place. We have provided a Substantial assurance rating for this objective.

#### **Objective 3: Effective quality assurance reporting arrangements are in place.**

2.13 The CAF details the required quality reporting mechanisms. We confirmed that the QPSC receive consistent update reports from the Commissioning teams including information on services in escalation and any actions taken, quality visits and meetings undertaken, details of serious incidents, safeguarding concerns, complaints and compliments.

2.14 Following each QPSC meeting, a Chair's report is produced. We reviewed the minutes and papers of the WHSS Joint Committee and confirmed the Chair's report of the QPSC was presented at each Joint Committee meeting. A 'Services in Escalation' report was also provided detailing the current position of these services.

- 2.15 The QPSC Chair's report is also issued to health boards for inclusion on the agenda of their respective quality committees. Our review of a sample of Health Board quality committee meetings identified that for some of the health boards' Chair's report was not always presented to the committee. **(Matter Arising 1)** We acknowledge the Independent Members and officers from health boards sit on the WHSS committees and are therefore made aware of quality matters. However, the regular inclusion of the Chair's report in health board committee papers ensures that the information contained in the reports is available for review and scrutiny by a wider audience, including the public.
- 2.16 Our review of the minutes and papers from the QPSC identified a number of other quality update reports including:
- Reports that had been undertaken by Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Care Quality Commission (CQC) on the commissioned services.
  - An update report and action plan on one of the services within Mental Health & Vulnerable Groups that was at escalation level 4.
  - Information in relation to the recent QPSC development day. The day consisted of an update on the CAF and how the Quality team are able to obtain assurance through areas such as SLAs, Service Specifications and performance & escalation.
- 2.17 We also saw a copy of the QPSC annual report which is provided to health boards. The report provided an update of the areas that were reported to the Joint Committee in the Chair's report, which included updates on the commissioned services.

#### Conclusion:

- 2.18 We recognise that there are sufficient quality assurance reporting arrangements on the commissioned services within WHSSC. However, the onward reporting of the quality of commissioned services is not always evident within the health boards. We have provided a Reasonable assurance for this objective.

## Appendix A: Management Action Plan

<b>Matter Arising 1: Monitoring of WHSSC quality matters in Health Board committee meetings (Operation)</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>
<p>The Quality and Patient Safety Committee (QPSC) Chair’s report provides an update from each of the Commissioning Teams and a summary of services that are in escalation. Chair’s reports from each QPSC are presented at the Joint Committee meetings and are forwarded onto the health boards for inclusion within the papers of their respective Quality Committee meetings. We reviewed the papers of the last four quality committees for four health boards and found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In one health board the Chair’s report was an agenda item on three out of four of their quality committee meetings.</li> <li>• In two health boards the Chair’s report was an agenda item on only one of their four meetings.</li> <li>• One health board did not appear to have the Chair’s report as an agenda item at any of the quality committee meetings that we reviewed.</li> </ul>	<p>WHSSC is unable to provide assurance to health boards on the quality of care it commissions on their behalf.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<p>1.1 We acknowledge that the action of including Chair’s reports on health board quality committee agendas is outside of WHSSC’s control. However, WHSSC should liaise with health boards to communicate to them the importance of their committees being sighted on this information in order to scrutinise, and gain assurance from it, on behalf of their local population. WHSSC should work with the health board officers and Independent Members who sit on WHSSC committees to facilitate this.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Medium</b></p>

Agreed Management Action	Target Date	Responsible Officer
1.1 Consider the draft report in QPS Development Day.	26/10/2022	Director of Nursing & Quality
Present Final report and Management Action Plan to WHSSC QPS Committee.	25/12/2022	Director of Nursing & Quality
Appendix report to QPS Chairs report for submission and consideration by WHSSC Joint Committee.	8/11/2022	Chair WHSSC QPS Committee
Report to be considered by All Wales Health Board Chairs QPS Committee.	Nov 2022	Chair WHSSC QPS Committee
Future auditing of compliance to be monitored by the above committee.	Ongoing	All Wales Chairs QPS Committee

## Appendix B: Assurance opinion and action plan risk rating

### Audit Assurance Ratings

We define the following levels of assurance that governance, risk management and internal control within the area under review are suitable designed and applied effectively:

	<b>Substantial assurance</b>	Few matters require attention and are compliance or advisory in nature. <b>Low impact</b> on residual risk exposure.
	<b>Reasonable assurance</b>	Some matters require management attention in control design or compliance. <b>Low to moderate impact</b> on residual risk exposure until resolved.
	<b>Limited assurance</b>	More significant matters require management attention. <b>Moderate impact</b> on residual risk exposure until resolved.
	<b>No assurance</b>	Action is required to address the whole control framework in this area. <b>High impact</b> on residual risk exposure until resolved.
	<b>Assurance not applicable</b>	Given to reviews and support provided to management which form part of the internal audit plan, to which the assurance definitions are not appropriate. These reviews are still relevant to the evidence base upon which the overall opinion is formed.

### Prioritisation of Recommendations

We categorise our recommendations according to their level of priority as follows:

Priority level	Explanation	Management action
High	Poor system design OR widespread non-compliance. Significant risk to achievement of a system objective OR evidence present of material loss, error or misstatement.	Immediate*
Medium	Minor weakness in system design OR limited non-compliance. Some risk to achievement of a system objective.	Within one month*
Low	Potential to enhance system design to improve efficiency or effectiveness of controls. Generally issues of good practice for management consideration.	Within three months*

\* Unless a more appropriate timescale is identified/agreed at the assignment.



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