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Review of operational quality and safety arrangements – **Hywel Dda University Health Board**

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The team who delivered the work comprised Anne Beegan and Phil Jones.

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Summary report

Introduction

- 1 In our 2017 [Structured Assessment report](#) for Hywel Dda University Health Board (the Health Board), we identified that the operational directorate teams at that time needed to mature, and that the operational structures needed to be further developed, to support the Health Board's governance arrangements, particularly in relation to quality and safety.
- 2 We also identified that improvements were needed to ensure that the Board received the necessary assurances from its committees, in particular, from its Quality, Safety and Experience Assurance Committee (QSEAC), Work was underway to reconfigure the QSEAC and its supporting structures at that time, with the aim of improving assurance flows.
- 3 In our 2018 [Structured Assessment report](#) we further identified that the Health Board continues to strengthen governance and management arrangements, but there is recognition that there remain some weaknesses in quality and safety governance arrangements. We identified that work has taken place to revisit and refine the QSEAC supporting structures, but agendas remain long, duplication exists between sub-committees and many issues discussed are best placed at an operational level.
- 4 As part of our 2018 audit plan for the Health Board, we included local work to review the Health Board's operational quality and safety arrangements. This review commenced in September 2018 and asked the following question: **Are the Health Board's operational quality and safety arrangements and structures effective?**
- 5 In undertaking this work, we have examined arrangements and structures at a directorate¹ and corporate level. We have also examined the arrangements and structures at a committee level. This has included QSEAC and its supporting sub-committees, in particular, the Operational Quality, Safety and Experience Sub-Committee (Operational QSESC).
- 6 Our work has included interviews with all directorate senior management teams as well as senior leads for quality and safety across the Health Board. We have also reviewed documentation including minutes of meetings, committee papers, organisational structures and risk registers. We have observed the QSEAC and the Operational QSESC.

¹ We have reviewed ten directorates. These are the four hospital directorates (Bronglais, Glangwili, Prince Philip and Withybush), the three county directorates (Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire), and the three Health Board wide directorates (Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, Scheduled Care, Women and Children).

Summary of findings

- 7 We conclude that the Health Board now has some good quality and safety arrangements at a directorate level, supported by developing corporate arrangements but these are not yet consistent, and the flow of assurance from directorates to the Board is not as effective as it could be.
- 8 In reaching this conclusion we have found that:
- some directorate level arrangements are good, but they are not sufficiently consistent;
 - corporate quality and safety arrangements are developing but capacity within the clinical audit and patient experience teams is an issue and shared learning is not as prominent as it could be;
 - the Operational Quality, Safety and Experience sub-committee is evolving with scope to take greater assurance from directorates and to focus more on key risks, but attendance is problematic; and
 - the functioning of QSEAC is improving but work is needed to address attendance at two of its other sub-committees and improve the quality of papers.
- 9 We explore these findings in more detail later in this report.

Recommendations

- 10 In undertaking this work, we have identified a number of recommendations. These are set out in [Exhibit 1](#) below.

Exhibit 1: recommendations

Recommendations	
R1	To improve consistency, the Health Board should introduce a standardised approach to the quality and safety arrangements within the operational directorates. The standardisation should apply to structures, core membership, frequency of meetings and core agenda items for discussion. The county director arrangements must include consideration of primary care quality and safety matters.
R2	To ensure a multidisciplinary approach is taken to considering quality and safety matters, the Health Board should encourage and support attendance by relevant medical staff at meetings across the structures.

Recommendations

- R3 To improve quality and safety assurance flows between the directorates and the Board, the Health Board should:
- merge the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Quality, Safety and Experience Sub-Committee with the Operational QSESC;
 - ensure that the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities directorate has a directorate level governance committee;
 - align all directorate level governance committees so they provide a report directly to the Operational QSESC; and
 - introduce a standardised report template for all directorates to submit to the Operational QSESC, with a summarised version submitted to the QSEAC.
- R4 To improve the focus of the Operational QSESC, the sub-committee should incorporate within its activities assurance that learning from risks and action plans is being shared across directorates. Risks that should be discussed should include severe and high risks, as well as risks that are affecting a number of directorates.
- R5 To improve quality and safety assurance flows to the QSEAC, the Health Board should:
- support and encourage attendance at the Improving Experience sub-committee and Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee; and
 - revisit the scope of the Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee.
- R6 To support effective use of limited corporate team resources, the Health Board should consider bringing together county and hospital directorate governance arrangements in line with the arrangements now in place for the Executive Performance Reviews. This can be done at specific intervals during the year.
- R7 To support the directorate governance arrangements, the Health Board should expedite the rollout of the directorate-based quality and safety dashboards.
- R8 To ensure that quality and safety are considered from both a professional and operational perspective, the Medical Director and Director of Clinical Strategy needs to ensure that the Associate Medical Director (AMD) for Quality and Safety in the new medical directorate structure works closely with the two new operational AMD posts for primary and secondary care.

Detailed report

Some directorate level arrangements are good, but they are not sufficiently consistent

- 11 Our work has identified that each of the directorates discusses quality and safety matters, but there is variation in the local quality and safety structures and the depth of the discussion.
- 12 Six of the directorates have separate governance meetings focusing solely on quality and safety. These meetings are at the highest level within the respective directorates and run alongside the routine business meetings which focus on finance and performance. With the exception of the Prince Philip directorate, meetings are on a monthly basis and cover a wide range of quality and safety aspects. Prince Philip directorate holds governance meetings every two months.
- 13 Three of the directorates include quality and safety matters as part of the monthly business or management team meetings. These meetings are also on a monthly basis, but discussion is generally limited to concerns, complaints and risks.
- 14 For the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Directorate, directorate level quality and safety are the focus of a dedicated sub-committee reporting directly to the QSEAC. This means that discussions for this directorate take place at a much higher level within the Health Board. This is an historical arrangement as a result of previous concerns, which are no longer evident. The agendas cover a wide range of quality and safety matters, but frequency of meetings is limited to every two months.
- 15 The arrangements across the directorates are set out in [Exhibit 2](#).

Exhibit 2: directorate arrangements for quality and safety

Directorate	Committee	Sole focus on quality and safety	Frequency
Bronglais	Hospital Management Committee	No	Monthly
Carmarthenshire	County Management Team	No	Monthly
Ceredigion	County Management Team	No	Monthly
Glangwili	Governance	Yes	Monthly
Mental Health and Learning Disabilities	Sub-committee of QSEAC	Yes	Every two months
Pembrokeshire	Governance	Yes	Monthly
Prince Philip	Governance	Yes	Every two months
Scheduled Care	Governance	Yes	Monthly
Withybush	Governance	Yes	Monthly

Directorate	Committee	Sole focus on quality and safety	Frequency
Women and Children	Governance	Yes	Monthly

Source: Wales Audit Office analysis of interviews and documentation

- 16 In the six directorates with separate governance meetings, there is a good range of agenda items. As well as concerns, complaints and risks, agenda items include:
- compliance with Welsh Health Circulars;
 - Healthcare Inspectorate Wales reports;
 - results of audits, both internal and external;
 - Royal College reports;
 - results of Community Health Council visits;
 - serious incidents;
 - mortality reviews; and
 - patient experience.
- 17 The range of discussion however is not consistent or standardised across the six directorate governance meetings.
- 18 In the three directorates where quality and safety are considered as part of wider business meetings, the relevant directorates are reliant on supporting assurance groups which sit below the directorate level. Reports from these groups however are not always available for the management team meetings. This is particularly the case for the Ceredigion directorate.
- 19 Across all of the county directorates, there is limited focus on the quality and safety aspects of primary care provision within the governance and management meetings. The quality and safety of primary care are instead managed through the central primary care team reporting directly to the Director of Primary Care, Community and Long-Term Care.
- 20 Over the last six months, the Health Board has been developing a quality and safety dashboard. Initially developed for the QSEAC, it is the intention to develop underpinning dashboards for each of the directorates. Our work has identified that the directorate dashboards are not yet in place, although the directorates are drawing on the relevant sources of information. There is however a bespoke dashboard available to support the Women and Children's Directorate, focusing predominantly on maternity services.
- 21 The directorate heads of nursing and general managers are largely driving the quality and safety agendas. Where quality and safety form part of the routine business meetings, membership is largely based on the core directorate team. For directorates with governance meetings, membership is larger and more multidisciplinary. Representation from nursing and therapy professions is good,

and there is regular attendance by corporate teams including patient experience, clinical audit and redress.

- 22 Clinical directors and cluster leads are members of all quality and safety structures, but medical representation at meetings is generally limited with frequent part attendance or apologies sent. Directorates identified challenges engaging medics in the quality and safety agenda, including concerns, complaints and incidents largely because of time constraints around clinical commitments.
- 23 All directorates have their own professional nursing forums to bring together lead nurses from across the underpinning departments to consider quality and safety. These forums feed into the quality and safety discussions in the directorates and the senior nursing team meetings across the Health Board with the Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience.

Corporate quality and safety arrangements are developing but capacity within the clinical audit and patient experience teams is an issue and shared learning is not as prominent as it could be

- 24 The Health Board has corporate teams in place to support key aspects of quality and safety, including concerns, complaints, serious incidents, patient experience and clinical audit. These teams report directly to the Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience.
- 25 These corporate teams have previously worked in isolation. The Community Health Council, in particular, has raised concerns over the variability in the management of issues, and the differing approaches within each team. Through the senior nursing team meetings, these corporate teams have become more connected over the last 12 months, with approaches starting to become more consistent.
- 26 Capacity within some of the corporate teams however is an issue. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) is sighted of the capacity constraints within the clinical audit team, and the Health Board's own benchmark indicates that patient experience capacity is the lowest in Wales. Although the Board supported a new patient experience framework in December 2018, funds have only recently been made available to support the rollout of the 'Friends and Family Test' system.
- 27 In July 2018, the Board approved the Health Board's Quality Improvement Strategic Framework. This places greater emphasis on sharing the learning from improvement activities. All of the corporate teams focus on learning; however, capacity is such that attention is drawn to supporting the directorates respond to incidents and events as they arise, restricting the ability of the corporate teams to share learning more widely to prevent the issues reoccurring. The Health Board formally launched the Quality Improvement Strategic Framework in March 2019, which should start to help promote the learning agenda more widely.

- 28 The number of directorates within the Health Board also places demands on the corporate teams' capacity, particularly in relation to attending governance meetings. The bringing together of some of the quality and safety arrangements within directorates, such as county and hospital directorates, may help alleviate the capacity constraints on the corporate teams. This would align with the approach taken within the Executive Performance Reviews, which is increasingly considering the performance of county and hospital directorates on a joint basis.
- 29 Quality and safety are also the professional responsibility of the Medical Director and Director of Clinical Strategy. Amendments are currently being made to the Medical Directorate structure with a proposed new Associate Medical Director (AMD) lead for quality and safety. In addition, there are two new operational AMD posts for primary and secondary care, which are designed to provide day-to-day support to the directorates on medical related issues. It will be important for these posts to work together to make sure that quality and safety are not managed in isolation but collectively across operational and professional domains.

The operational quality, safety and experience sub-committee is evolving with scope to provide greater assurance from directorates and to focus more on key risks, but attendance is problematic

- 30 In July 2018, the Primary and Community Quality, Safety and Experience Sub-Committee merged with the Acute Quality, Safety and Experience Sub-Committee to become the Operational Quality, Safety and Experience Sub-Committee (QSESC).
- 31 The new Operational QSESC has met on six occasions and is still evolving. It meets on a bi-monthly basis and reports directly to the QSEAC. It is one of eight sub-committees reporting to QSEAC, with plans also to merge the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities QSESC into the Operational QSESC once the current sub-committee is fully embedded.
- 32 The Operational QSESC however is not yet working effectively. Membership is large at 24 as it seeks to include representation from all directorates and corporate teams, but attendance by some members is a problem. For the three meetings held between September 2018 and January 2019, half of members were not represented, including a number of the directorates. However, the agreed quorum for the meeting is a third of members. There is however attendance from a wider group of staff outside those identified on the terms of reference ([Exhibit 3](#)).

Exhibit 3: attendance at Operational QSESC

	Number of members (or representatives) in attendance	Number of members not present or represented	Total number of staff in attendance included members (or representatives)
September 2018	12	12	17
November 2018	12	12	20
January 2019	11	13	15

Source: Wales Audit Office analysis of documentation

- 33 The sub-committee aims to seek assurance from the directorates that actions are being taken to address quality and safety issues through exception reporting. However, directorates are not always present at the meetings to report back or there are frequently no issues to report. The sub-committee also seeks to monitor the management of operational risks but the number of risks that need to be considered has meant that this has become unmanageable within the time available in meetings.
- 34 Risks and action plans to address quality and safety issues however are increasingly being considered as part of the Executive Performance Reviews (EPRs) with the directorates, posing a risk of duplication between the EPRs and the business of the sub-committee. Risks and action plans are also being considered by relevant operational forums.
- 35 To reduce the risk of duplication, the sub-committee should focus its attention on taking assurance that learning from risks and action plans is being shared across directorates. This should include severe and high risks, as well as risks that are affecting a number of directorates.
- 36 Not all of the directorates however are represented at the sub-committee, with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities the focus of the separate sub-committee reporting to QSEAC.
- 37 Primary care is also not a key feature of the sub-committee despite its scope. Our work has identified that primary care quality and safety matters appear to be largely reported and managed through operational structures to the Director of Primary Care, Community and Long-Term Care, with limited scrutiny and assurance through any of the Board’s committee structures. This is of particular concern given the recent changes to the GP indemnity scheme which requires health boards to have a much greater understanding of the level of quality and safety risks that they are carrying in primary care.

- 38 Like the directorate structures, there is medical membership on the sub-committee but attendance is largely by Associate Medical Directors or chairs of sub-groups, for example, the Rapid Response to Acute Illness Learning Set (RRAILS) sub-group, although their attendance can be limited to part of the meeting due to other clinical commitments.
- 39 The sub-committee has a number of groups from which it takes assurances. Good assurances are taken from the Medical Devices Group and the Mental Capacity Act and Consent Group. Assurance is also taken from the Nutrition and Hydration Group although it is acknowledged that this group is only focused on inpatient care. Attendance at the Organ Donation Group and RRAILS Group however has been problematic resulting in cancelled meetings. Although assurances are taken from these groups, these are not as frequent as they should be.
- 40 As well as duplication with the EPRs, there is also some duplication between the sub-committee and QSEAC in relation to agenda item discussions. Some of this is on purpose by way of having initial discussions ahead of a more focused discussion at QSEAC, but this is not always a case.
- 41 The sub-committee however is not yet able to provide assurance to the QSEAC that operational quality and safety issues are being managed. There is currently no formal standardised reporting from the directorates to the sub-committee with reliance placed predominantly on exception reporting. Consequently, there is a gap between the QSEAC and the directorate teams.
- 42 The sub-committee has the potential to address this by seeking standardised assurances from all directorates, or combined directorates, on a range of quality and safety issues, by means of a standardised report. These can then be summarised to provide collective assurance to the QSEAC and ultimately the Board.

The functioning of QSEAC is improving but work is needed to address attendance at two of its other sub-committees and to improve the quality of papers

- 43 Historically, the attendance at the QSEAC has been large, agendas have been long, and the committee members have been unable to take assurance on a number of agenda items either due to the quality of the papers presented, or cancellations of sub-committee meetings.
- 44 Our recent observations of the committee during 2019 have identified that the functioning of the QSEAC has however started to improve. The committee attendance has now been refined to only include those who need to be there, and accounting officers are now called in to the meeting for specific agenda items as and when required. This has helped address the large attendance levels which largely consisted of representation from corporate teams.

- 45 The committee however still struggles to take assurance from a number of its sub-committees. This includes the operational QSESC, due to the reasons set out in paragraphs 32 to 42, but also the Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee and the Improving Experience sub-committee. Both of these sub-committees have struggled with attendance making it difficult to fully explore many of the agenda items for these meetings. On a number of occasions, these meetings have also had to be cancelled because of low attendance rates. The Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee has also struggled with a lack of clarity on its role. The Medical Director and Director of Clinical Strategy has recently taken over the chair of this committee to improve its effectiveness.
- 46 QSEAC papers also continue to be large with some concerns remaining that there is too much detail, which detracts attention away from the key issues and mitigating actions being taken. Some papers also focus too much on performance matters which are the separate consideration of the Business Planning and Performance Assurance Committee. This can in part be due to the authors not always being able to provide the right focus for the QSEAC.
- 47 The committee has undertaken a recent self-assessment exercise which reflects the issues raised through our work. An action plan is being put in place to take forward many of the improvement areas raised.

Appendix 1

Management response

Exhibit 4: management response to recommendations

Ref	Recommendation	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R1	To improve consistency, the Health Board should introduce a standardised approach to the quality and safety arrangements within the operational directorates. The standardisation should apply to structures, core membership, frequency of meetings and core agenda items for discussion. The county director arrangements must include consideration of primary care quality and safety matters.	Options for standardising the approach to quality and safety arrangements have been agreed. This includes templates for terms of reference, agendas for meetings and standardised reporting. Templates will be developed in collaboration with the Corporate Governance Team. The Operational, Quality, Experience Sub-Committee (OQSEC) will be the overarching sub-committee for operational quality and safety issues, specialist, primary and acute services, with cross-organisational groups reporting to OQSEC. Quality and safety matters are included in the county directors' meetings and this will be monitored.	April 2020	Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary
R2	To ensure a multidisciplinary approach is taken to considering quality and safety matters, the Health Board should encourage and support attendance by relevant medical staff at meetings across the structures.	A restructure of the Associate and Deputy Medical Directors has been undertaken. This new structure includes the appointment of a new Associate Medical Director for Quality and Safety and the proposal to strengthen quality medical lead roles throughout the services.	October 2019	Medical Director and Director of Strategy

Ref	Recommendation	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R3a	To improve quality and safety assurance flows between the directorates and the Board, the Health Board should merge the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Quality, Safety and Experience Sub-Committee with the Operational QSESC.	<p>Options for standardising the approach to quality and safety arrangements agreed. This includes templates for terms of reference and standardised reports.</p> <p>Operational Quality, Experience Sub-Committee (OQSEC) will be the overarching sub-committee for operational quality and safety issues, both specialist, primary and acute services, with cross-organisational groups reporting to OQSEC.</p> <p>Transition arrangements for changes to Mental Health and Learning Disabilities quality report arrangements will be developed and worked through with the triumvirate team. Any specific exceptions requiring escalating to QSEAC escalated via OQSEAC, and appropriate staff asked to attend QSEAC as appropriate.</p>	April 2020	<p>Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary</p> <p>Director of Therapies and Health Sciences</p> <p>Clinical Director for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities</p>
R3b	To improve quality and safety assurance flows between the directorates and the Board, the Health Board should ensure that the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities directorate have a directorate level governance committee.	There is a Mental Health and Learning Disabilities directorate level governance committee. Work will be undertaken to strengthen and standardise the reporting arrangements to OQSEC (as recommendation 1)	April 2020	Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary

Ref	Recommendation	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R3c	To improve quality and safety assurance flows between the directorates and the Board, the Health Board should align all directorate level governance committees, so they provide a report directly to the Operational QSESC.	Options for standardising the approach to quality and safety arrangements agreed. This includes templates for terms of reference and standardise reports. Operational Quality, Experience Sub-Committee (OQSEC) will be the overarching sub-committee for operational quality and safety issues, both specialist, primary and acute services, with cross-organisational groups reporting to OQSEC.	April 2020	Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary
R3d	To improve quality and safety assurance flows between the directorates and the Board, the Health Board should introduce a standardised report template for all directorates to submit to the Operational QSESC, with a summarised version submitted to the QSEAC.	Options for standardising the approach to quality and safety arrangements agreed. This includes templates for terms of reference and standardise reports (see recommendation 1).	April 2020	Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary

Ref	Recommendation	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R4	To improve the focus of the Operational QSESC, the sub-committee should incorporate within its activities assurance that learning from risks and action plans is being shared across directorates. Risks that should be discussed should include severe and high risks, as well as risks that are affecting a number of directorates.	<p>Options for standardising the approach to quality and safety arrangements agreed. This includes templates for terms of reference and standardise reports (see recommendation 1).</p> <p>Agreement that risks and learning will be embedded into the standard reporting templates. The templates will also advise on how learning from risks and action plans are being shared across Directorate and other areas.</p> <p>Deep dives are currently being discussed at each QSESC meeting and will continue, these will support in-depth conversation required. The Risk Registers are to be used to inform these.</p> <p>A Listening and Learning Group is being established to facilitate shared learning across the organisation. Reporting arrangements for the group will be finalised and endorsed through QSEAC.</p>	April 2020	<p>Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary</p> <p>Director of Therapies and Health Sciences</p> <p>Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary</p>
R5a	To improve quality and safety assurance flows to the QSEAC, the Health Board should support and encourage attendance at the Improving Experience sub-committee and Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee.	<p>The appointments of a new AMD for Quality and Safety and the enhanced roles of clinical leads will support the wider medical engagement at sub-committees.</p> <p>The terms of reference for both the Improving Experience sub-committee and Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee have been reviewed, including membership, with the aim of focussing membership and attendance at meetings.</p>	October 2019	<p>Medical Director and Director of Strategy</p> <p>Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Medical Director and Director of Strategy</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R5b	To improve quality and safety assurance flows to the QSEAC, the Health Board should revisit the scope of the Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee.	The terms of reference for the Effective Clinical Practice sub-committee have been reviewed including membership; with a paper to be submitted to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.	Complete	Medical Director and Director of Strategy
R6	To support effective use of limited corporate team resources, the Health Board should consider bringing together county and hospital directorate governance arrangements in line with the arrangements now in place for the Executive Performance Reviews. This can be done at specific intervals during the year.	Whilst this recommendation is accepted the approach and arrangements to facilitate this will require further consideration with the Director of Operations and chairs of the various quality meetings. Meeting to be held to work through the arrangements and options to enable effective join up of governance meetings periodically throughout the year.	April 2020	Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary
R7	To support the directorate governance arrangements, the Health Board should expedite the rollout of the directorate-based quality and safety dashboards.	Task and finish group established which is jointly chaired by the Director of Nursing and Director of Planning. The work of the task and finish group has been expedited. A project plan is in place including agreement of the priority indicators to be populated and rolled out to directorates.	April 2020	Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Experience/Board Secretary
R8	To ensure that quality and safety are considered from both a professional and operational perspective, the Medical Director and Director of Clinical Strategy needs to ensure that the Associate Medical Director (AMD) for Quality and Safety in the new medical directorate structure works closely with the two new operational AMD posts for primary and secondary care.	The appointments of a new AMD for Quality and Safety and clinical leads will work closely with the two new operational AMD posts for primary and secondary care. There will also be close working relationships with the Assistant Director of Nursing for Quality and Assurance and Head of Governance for Quality and Assurance	October 2019	Medical Director and Director of Strategy

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