

Quality Improvement

April 2001

In *Going Forward: Primary Care Partnerships* it was identified that the Department of Human Services would develop a PCP Quality Framework which will be based on a cycle of effective planning in relation to community needs, establishment of standards, quality improvement initiatives and monitoring and review.

It is envisaged that the PCP Quality Framework will be a practical tool to assist PCPs continuously improve their *service system* so that it meets the needs of their catchment population. The Quality Framework will aim to facilitate the ongoing development of a social model of health with a strong emphasis on consumer, carer and community participation. It will focus on the three broad *service system* issues being addressed by PCPs: partnerships, integrated service planning and service coordination. If required, it may also contain specific modules for each of the individual elements of the PCP Strategy, such as Better Access to Services and Health Promotion.

Proposed process for Quality Framework Development

The PCP Quality Framework will be developed in collaboration with the sector and with consumers, carers, peak organizations and quality experts. The proposed process includes the following steps:

- Establishment of reference group including representatives from the groups identified above;
Review of existing quality frameworks and literature;
Identification of existing quality initiatives within PCPs and member agencies;
- Consultation with PCPs and other stakeholders to: inform the development of the Quality Framework Discussion Paper and develop draft quality criteria and indicators;
- Development of the Quality Framework Discussion Paper (including draft quality criteria and indicators);
- Finalisation of the Quality Framework (including quality criteria and indicators).

Community Health Plan: Quality Improvement Activities

The *Community Health Plan Template* (March 2001) outlines a range of quality improvement activities which PCPs will be required to include in their Community Health Plan (CHP) (see Outcome 3.5).

Originally it was envisaged that the first CHP would incorporate a Quality Improvement Strategy for the PCP. However, a range of factors has resulted in this timeline being revised. The development of the PCP Quality Framework has been re-scheduled so that it co-incides (and assists with) the ongoing review and development of CHPs.

This means that:

PCPs will not be expected to outline an over-arching *Quality Improvement Strategy* in their first Community Health Plan. The *Quality Framework Discussion Paper* will be available to assist PCPs review their first Community Health Plan, and a *Quality Improvement Strategy* will be an important element of the second (and subsequent) Community Health Plans.

Instead, PCPs will be required to identify a range of quality improvement activities in their CHPs.

The Quality Improvement Activities required in the first CHP are outlined below. They can be broken down into two types of activities:

- The first set of activities are related to establishing systems for ongoing quality improvement within the PCP; and
- The second set of activities are about undertaking a specific quality improvement initiative to address a local priority issue.

1. Requirements relevant to establishing systems for quality improvement

There are four requirements that relate to establishing the basis for the future development of a culture of continuous quality improvement within PCPs. These requirements are discussed below.

1. *Identification of existing quality initiatives being undertaken by individual agencies across the PCP such as accreditation; performance and monitoring; feedback and participation; and projects aimed at improving quality and access to services.*
2. *Processes to obtain feedback from service providers, consumers, carers and the community on service quality and service effectiveness issues within the Partnership.*

These two elements are included because understanding the current approaches to quality improvement within member agencies and for PCP activities will enable the development of a Quality Framework and Quality Improvement Strategies which build on the strengths within the PCP and do not duplicate existing program requirements.

3. *Introduction of a management and coordination structure that supports a collaborative approach to the pursuit of continuous improvement across the PCP.*

This element is to ensure that mechanisms for the ongoing development of a culture of continuous quality improvement are built into the establishment of the PCP structure.

4. *Identification of quality improvement strategies for individual elements of the PCP Strategy in areas where this is required, such as Health Promotion.*

Quality improvement is an important part of the ongoing development of each of the elements of the PCP Strategy. PCPs should identify the quality improvement activities that have been planned for each element, or cross-reference to the relevant sections of the CHP where this is discussed.

2. Requirement for a Quality Initiative to address an identified local priority issue

The fifth requirement in the CHP Template is that PCPs will have:

Identified priority local quality issues/s to be addressed by the Partnership and developed initiative/s to address these issue/s in the catchment.

The Quality Initiative should aim to either:

- Improve the **service system** for at least one priority group (identified through the integrated service planning process). These projects may focus on improving one or more elements of the PCP Strategy so that the system is better able to meet the needs of this group; or
- Build the capacity of the PCP in a specific area, such as consumer and carer participation, integrated disease management, assessment, cultural sensitivity, risk management.

The Quality Initiative should demonstrate:

- Involvement of consumers, carers and communities
- Improved outcomes for consumers, carers and communities
- Active involvement and commitment from senior management to maximise opportunities for system improvement
- Built-in evaluation processes
- Systems change that is sustainable after the quality improvement initiative ceases.

These quality improvement initiatives will be the beginning of a staged process, with Primary Care Partnerships focusing on additional groups, issues or elements in subsequent years. They will also inform the development of the PCP Quality Framework.

For further information on Quality in the PCP context, please contact Kate Silburn by telephone on 03 9616 7537 or by email on kate.silburn@dhs.vic.gov.au