Core 4 – Service Improvement

Status
Core – this is a key aspect of all jobs as everybody has a role in implementing policies and strategies and in improving services for users and the public.

Levels
1. Make changes in own practice and offer suggestions for improving services
2. Contribute to the improvement of services
3. Appraise, interpret and apply suggestions, recommendations and directives to improve services
4. Work in partnership with others to develop, take forward and evaluate direction, policies and strategies

Description
This dimension is about improving services in the interests of the users of those services and the public as a whole. The services might be services for the public (patients, clients and carers) or services that support the smooth running of the organisation (such as finance, estates). The services might be single or multi-agency and uni or multi-professional.

Improvements may be small scale, relating to specific aspects of a service or programme, or may be on a larger scale, affecting the whole of an organisation or service. They might arise from:

- formals evaluations (such as audit)
- more informal and ad hoc approaches (such as ‘bright ideas’)
- applying developments from elsewhere
- national policy and targets
- changes in legislation at international and national level
- working closely with users and the public
- the need to modernise services.

This dimension also covers the development of direction, policies and strategies to guide the work of the organisation or service, including agreeing vision, values and ethos. Leadership and partnership are key aspects here as it is through inspiring and working collectively with others that strategy and direction can be taken forward into service improvements.

Leadership includes such aspects as:

- understanding and rising to the challenges of service improvement – critical tasks that need to be done, problems and issues to be faced
- understanding the context in which services are to be improved – local politics, national policy imperatives, the local environment and the people in it
- understanding the characteristics of the people involved and building on their diversity
Progression through the levels in this dimension is characterised by:

- moving the implementing agreed changes to setting the context which guides and informs service improvements
- an increasing role in, and understanding of, direction, policies and strategies at a macro level
- increasing knowledge and skills in leading others, managing change and partnership working
- an increasing ability to identify direction in the longer term over a number of years rather than in the immediate to short term

Links to other KSF dimensions

This dimension is supported by:

- Core 1 Communication – which is a key aspect of taking forward policy, strategy and direction
- G5 Services and project management – which focuses on running services and projects in line with strategy and direction
- IK2 Information collection and analysis – as research and interpretation of information is a key part of setting strategy and direction.

This dimension is different from dimensions:

- Core 5 Quality which focuses on the quality of current practice whereas this dimension is about improving services
- G2 Development and innovation which focuses on appraising new and innovative methods, equipment, concepts and ideas and testing them in practice. This might be a fore-runner to service improvement
- G7 Capacity and capability which focuses on developing collective capacity – this might be necessary to support service improvements.

Terminology

Direction – the general way in which something should develop or progress

Policy – set of principles or rules which govern the way an organisation/partnership deals with key issues

Strategy – a carefully devised plan to achieve long-term goals and direction

Values – the things that an organisation/partnership believes in and seeks to realise in its work

Objectives – clearly defined and measurable results which need to be achieved.
Level 1 – Make changes in own practice and offer suggestions for improving services

**Indicators:**

The worker:

a) discusses with line manager/work team the changes that need to be made in own practice and the reasons for them
b) adapts own practice as agreed and to time seeking support if necessary
c) effectively carries out tasks related to evaluating services when asked
d) passes on to the appropriate person constructive views and ideas on improving services for users and the public
e) alerts line manager/work team when direction, policies and strategies are adversely affecting users of services or the public.

**Examples of application:**

Tasks related to evaluating services might include:

- audits (e.g. clinical, financial, resource)
- customer satisfaction surveys
- risk assessments
- staff questionnaires.

Direction, policies and strategies:

- buildings, structures and grounds
- cleaning and catering
- development and innovation
- education, training and development
- equality and diversity
- financial services
- financial management
- health and social care services
- health and wellbeing
- health, safety and security
- human resources – selection, recruitment, retention, deployment
- information and knowledge
- public relations and marketing
- other services that affect people’s health and wellbeing (e.g. transport, education, housing)
- procurement and commissioning
- promotion of equality and diversity
- resource use
- service effectiveness
- systems and equipment
- transport and logistics
- user involvement.
Level 2 – Contribute to the improvement of services

Indicators:

The worker:

a) discusses and agrees with the work team
   - the implications of direction, policies and strategies on their current practice
   - the changes that they can make as a team
   - the changes s/he can make as an individual
   - how to take the changes forward
b) constructively makes agreed changes to own work in the agreed timescale
   seeking support as and when necessary
c) supports others in understanding the need for and making agreed changes
d) evaluates own and other’s work when required to do so completing relevant
documentation
e) makes constructive suggestions as to how services can be improves for users and
   the public
f) constructively identifies issues with direction, policies and strategies in the
   interests of users and the public.

Examples of application:

Evaluating own and other’s work might be through:

- audit
- appraising own and team practice in the light of research findings
- comparisons of own services against those of others following benchmarking
  exercises
- satisfaction surveys.

Direction, policies and strategies:

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Constructive suggestions might be related to:

- bright ideas
- feedback from users
- good practice elsewhere
- how to apply changes in legislation, policies and procedures
- how to implement recommendations
- how to respond effectively to evaluations
- own reflections and observations
- team discussion.

**Level 3** – Appraise, interpret and apply suggestions, recommendations and directives to improve services

*Indicators:*

**The worker:**

a) identifies and evaluates areas for potential service improvement
b) discusses and agrees with others:
   - how services should be improved as a result of suggestions, recommendations and directives
   - how to balance and prioritise competing interests
   - how improvements will be taken forward and implemented
c) constructively undertakes own role in improving services as agreed and to time, supporting others effectively during times of change and working with others to overcome problems and tensions as they arise
d) maintains and sustains direction, policies and strategies until they are firmly embedded in the culture inspiring others with values and a vision of the future whilst acknowledging traditions and background
e) enables and encourages others to:
   - understand and appreciate the influences on services and the reasons why improvements are being made
   - offer suggestions, ideas and views for improving services and developing direction, policies and strategies
   - alter their practice in line with agreed improvements
   - share achievements
   - challenge tradition
f) evaluates with others the effectiveness of service improvements and agrees that further action is required to take them forward
g) appraises draft policies and strategies for their effect on users and the public and makes recommendations for improvement.

*Examples of application:*

Areas for potential service improvement might include:

- assessing legislation, direction, policy and strategy
- assessing possible future demand for services
- assessing the results of evaluations
- keeping up to date with relevant work areas
- monitoring current service provision
- proactively seeking the views of others.

Others might include:

- users of services
- the public
- colleagues and co-workers
- people in other parts of the organisation
- other agencies

Evaluation might be through:

- analysis and interpretation of national and/or local policies and strategies and targets
- analysis of complaints and strategies
- audits
- focus groups
- impact assessments (e.g. environmental, equality, health, policy)
- meetings
- networks
- questionnaires
- reflective practice
- risk assessment
- structured observations
- surveys (e.g. user involvement, customer satisfaction, staff)

Direction, policies and strategies:

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- user involvement.
Further action required to take them forward might include:

- further modifying services
- implementing changes more widely
- maintaining current focus
- not adopting changes as they actually offer no recognised benefit
- providing feedback on their effectiveness
- publicising local developments in wider forums.

**Level 4** – Work in partnership with others to develop, take forward and evaluate direction, policies and strategies

**Indicators:**

*The worker:*

a) effectively engages the public, users of services and other interested parties in an open and effective discussion on values, direction, policies and strategies for the organisation/services

b) works effectively with others to clearly define values, direction and policies including guidance on how to respond when these are under pressure or interests are in conflict

c) works effectively with others to continually review values, direction and policies in the light of changing circumstances

d) works effectively with others to formulate strategies and associated objectives that:
   - are consistent with values, directions and policies
   - are attainable given available resources and timescales
   - contain sufficient detail for the operational planning of services, projects and programmes
   - take account of constraints
   - realistically balance competing interests and tensions whilst maintaining values and direction

e) communicates values, direction, policies and strategies effectively to relevant people and enables them to:
   - appraise and apply them to their area of responsibility
   - feed in their views and suggestions for change

f) works effectively with everyone affected by direction, policies and strategies to evaluate their impact and effectiveness and feed this information into ongoing improvements.

**Examples of application:**

Others might include:

- users of services
- the wider public
- colleagues and co-workers
- people in other parts of the organisation
- other agencies
- elected representatives
Direction, policies and strategies:

- buildings, structures and grounds
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